Walter Pater.

From a photograph by Elliott & Fry.

WALTER PATER

A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

EDWARD THOMAS

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TO

JOSEPH CONRAD

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I

LEGEND

WALTER PATER is a hero—our modern English half-hero, half-martyr of Style. In his essay *On Style* he showed us the French martyr, Flaubert, grunting, sweating at the 'tardy and painful' labour of prose composition. He himself is thought of as another such labourer but without grunting and sweating, because he was for half his lifetime a fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, a modest, polite, and quiet man. He was accused of collecting beautiful words and phrases on slips of paper, and then arranging numbers of them in an arabesque, which was called an essay. He has become mythical—the heavy-eyed, heavy-jawed, bald man, wearing a silk hat, and an apple-green tie, who would leave his work and give his time to any caller without a sign of impatience or even resignation. Every undergraduate at one time heard the story of how Pater was at a college meeting when scholarships were awarded, and

listened indifferently to the names of the candidates until 'Sanctuary' was mentioned. 'Ah, yes,' he said, 'Mr. Sanctuary—I remember—a very beautiful name.' It is sometimes added that he at once recommended Mr. Sanctuary as a scholar. Clever undergraduates could manufacture similar stories, and so little was really known and remembered about the man that there was need of this industry. He had written books that were costly but few; he had been a don at Brasenose; he had been exquisite in his tastes and ways; among his disciples were Oscar Wilde and Mr. Arthur Symons. But as to the man himself, nothing was known to connect him with the piece of prose about Leonardo's La Gioconda, except that he had written it. Everyone could repeat some phrase out of that description, and used it as an incantation. A strange fascination was found in 'the eyelids are a little weary': no one was too humble to claim something like the 'strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions' out of which was wrought the beauty of Mona Lisa; no one too proud to have a soul, 'with all its maladies.' The mere words—strange, fantastic, exquisite, weary, desire, lust, sin, malady, love, grave—could decorate the melancholy of youth. It was easy to pass from this languid lyric to the disciple's exuberant imitations, and the in-

experienced seemed to wear all experience 'lightly like a flower' as they repeated :—

> There were times when it seemed to Dorian Gray that the whole of history was merely the record of his own life, not as he had lived it in act and circumstance, but as his imagination had created it for him, as it had been in his brain and in his passions. He felt that he had known them all, those strange terrible figures that had passed across the stage of the world and made sin so marvellous and evil so full of wonder. It seemed to him that in some mysterious way their lives had been his own. . . .

Here also there was lust, strangeness, weariness, and blood was added, though not life. It made a sin like a pomegranate or willow leaf on the wall-paper, a crime like a vase. On the other hand it harmonised with the idea, attributed to Pater, that religion was 'a beautiful disease.' In *Appreciations*, he did say that the monastic religion of the Middle Age 'was, in fact, in many of its bearings, like a beautiful disease or disorder of the senses.' But the story was told that Pater spoke of religion as 'a beautiful disease' in one of his lectures. One of his hearers, an undergraduate, reported this to his father, with the alteration of 'loathsome' for 'beautiful.' The father complained, and Pater's answer was that he did not think he could have said 'loathsome,' but he might have

said 'a beautiful disease.' With that, it is said, the father was quite satisfied.

This legendary don, into whose remarkable bad looks 'the soul with all its maladies had passed,' was supposed to be above worldly and university matters. Thus he was said to have excused the lighting of bonfires in the college quadrangle on the ground that St. Mary's spire in the glare looked beautiful. He compared the noisy undergraduates after dinner to young tigers that had just been fed. Mr. Edmund Gosse, too, quotes the Bishop of Peterborough as recalling a talk in the Common Room at Brasenose on university reform: Pater, he said, interposed with the remark:

'I don't know what your object is. At present the undergraduate is a child of nature; he grows up like a wild rose in a country lane; you want to turn him into a turnip, rob him of all grace, and plant him out in rows.'

When someone suggested that his college work must trouble him, he answered: 'Well, not so much as you might think. Most of our men are fairly well to do, and have no need to learn very much. There are colleges where they say that some of the men really love literature, but that is not so here: if it were, it would be quite too dreadful.'

It would have surprised no one to hear this

character saying in languid monotone in a mixed company :—

'I rather look upon life as a chamber, which we decorate as we would decorate the chamber of the woman or the youth that we love, tinting the walls of it with symphonies of subdued colour, and filling it with works of fair form, and with flowers, and with strange scents, and with instruments of music. And this can be done now as well—better, rather—than at any former time: since we know that so many of the old aims were false, and so cease to be distracted by them. We have learned the weariness of creeds, and know that for us the grave has no secrets. We have learned that the aim of life is life; and what does successful life consist in? Simply,' said Mr. Rose, speaking very slowly, and with a soft solemnity, 'in the consciousness of exquisite living—in the making our own each highest thrill of joy that the moment offers us—be it some touch of colour on the sea or on the mountains, the early dew in the crimson shadows of a rose, the shining of a woman's limb in clear water, or . . .'

Here unfortunately a sound of 'Sh' broke softly from several mouths. . . .

That is the legendary Pater satirically intensified as Mr. Rose in Mr. W. H. Mallock's New Republic. The real Pater is more shadowy and elusive. For example, a book in two large volumes entitled Walter Pater was written by Mr. Thomas Wright. Evidently Mr. Wright could not think of a single volume for this hero of legend and criticism. But the book turned

out to be chiefly about a Mr. Jackson. It might be held to have proved that Pater had existed—hardly more; while the proof depended chiefly on Mr. Jackson, and Mr. Jackson might have been a beauteous fancy of Mr. Wright's but for a series of photographs of him in various costumes. The book is invaluable as evidence of the feeling that something ought to be known about so famous a man. It does not, however, body forth the exquisite 'amateur' of Mr. Edward Hutton's admiration: 'Pater not exquisite!' he quotes someone as saying, 'a poor sort of Pater that would be!'

This exquisite Pater is consistent and complete only in the ten volumes of his writings. The few well-attested facts about his social life are not easy to connect with his writings, but I must now present a few of them, mere dim and distorted shadows, though they seem, of the legend.

Pater was for the most part a reticent and silent man, who neither would nor could reveal himself in open ways. The legend grew partly out of the little that was known of him, partly out of the human need of creating a god or man who might seem worthy of *The Renaissance*, the essay *On Style*, and *Marius the Epicurean*. How far this need was real may be judged from the following facts.

II

BEGINNINGS

PATER's name is supposed to have come from Holland, and an Admiral Pater removed to England in Dutch William's time. It is not known whether the writer's family was connected with this admiral or any other Dutchman; but they were lacemakers in Buckinghamshire during the eighteenth century, and they may have been descended from those Paters who were at Thornton in the same county in 1618. Living at Weston-Underwood they were acquainted with Cowper, then at Olney, and some manuscript verses of the poet were treasured among them. They apparently kept no pedigree, but believed themselves of Dutch origin. Walter Pater himself was pleased to see, in a picture at Amsterdam, one of his own name heading the list of winners at an archery contest. Several times in his writings he pleased himself with a picture of an old house and an old family in it, where 'centuries of almost

"still" life—of birth, death, and the rest, as merely natural processes—had made them and their home what we find them.' In one place he modifies the combination by 'an element of French descent' (*The Child in the House*) in the inmates of the Old House —descent from Watteau, who, with his pupil, Jean Baptiste Pater, afterwards furnished the imaginary portrait of *A Prince of Court Painters*.

It is likely that the old house and established family were as much a dream and an ideal as a memory from Pater's own experience. For John Thompson Pater had emigrated to America, and his son, Richard Glode Pater, the writer's father, was born there. They returned to England and settled at Shadwell, near Wapping. Richard Pater became a doctor, 'a man of unobtrusive benevolence,' practising among the poor of Shadwell. He married Miss Mary Hill, had two sons and two daughters by her, and died at the age of forty-six. Walter Horatio Pater, the second son, born on August 4, 1839, was then a small child, and could afterwards remember little or nothing of his father. His mother also died when he was a boy, in 1854.

The family now left Shadwell for an old house and garden at Enfield, which are no more:

Walter Pater attended a local school at Enfield. The children's holidays were spent often at the house of their godmother and cousin, Mrs. Walter H. May. This was Fish Hall, near the Medway, about half-way between Hadlow and Tonbridge; it was perhaps the original of the 'old house' of Florian Deleal. The studies of *The Child in the House* and *Emerald Uthwart* probably belong to the simplest class of fiction, the conveniently more or less autobiographical. They indicate what Pater was as a boy, with modifications, or what he would have liked to be. The house 'not far beyond the gloom and rumours of the town' might have been the home at Enfield, but it is not strongly individualised—'the sort of house I have described'—and is perhaps only a vaguely ideal house, fit for Surrey or Kent, which are, he fancies, 'for Englishmen, the true landscape, true home-counties, by right, partly, of a certain earthy warmth in the yellow of the sand below their gorse-bushes and of a certain grey-blue mist after rain, in the hollows of the hills there.' The imaginary visitor to this house, 'the child of whom I am writing,' remembers its 'trimness' and 'comely whiteness'—the pear tree against the blue—the closet with the 'best china'—the 'childish treasures' of glass-beads, 'empty scent bottles still sweet,' 'thrum of

coloured silks'—'the crimson light through the fog'—the perfume of the lime blossoms—the white Angora cat with a face like a flower that became 'quite delicately human in its valetudinarianism'—the flowers of sealing-wax, that caused a burn, 'the languid scent of the ointments' applied—the boys, named Julian and Cecil, and the idea of 'the turning of the child's flesh to violets in the turf above him,' the father 'in beautiful soldier's things'—'the comely order of the sanctuary'—'that little room with the window across which the heavy blossoms could beat so peevishly in the wind'; he remembers 'the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and parallel with this, the rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright colour and choice form.' The old scent-bottles and flowers of sealing-wax are almost certainly memories; altogether the child is probably Walter Pater, either exaggerated, or shorn of what appeared to him inessential and incongruous.

Almost nothing has come down to supplement or correct these reminiscential fictions. But as Florian loved 'for their own sakes, church lights, holy days, all that belongs to the comely order of the sanctuary, the secrets of its white linen and holy vessels, and fonts of pure water,' so it is known that the boy Pater used

to play at priests, with sermons and processions: and as Florian knew 'a saintly person who loved him tenderly,' who gave him his religious impressions, so Pater, staying with friends at Hursley, once met Keble, who 'took a fancy to the quiet serious child, walked with him, and spoke with him of the religious life, in a way that made a deep impression on the boy's mind.' Pater's training was Anglican, as was convenient; for his father had formerly been a Roman Catholic, but was finally nothing in particular. The family had a Roman Catholic tradition, and it was fancied that the sons were always Catholics and the daughters Anglicans. The original convert was Thompson Pater, great-grandfather of Walter. He is said to have married a lady of an old Catholic family in Suffolk, named Gage; but he is also said to have married Mary Church, while his son, John Thompson, married Hester Grange. There were, at any rate, Roman Catholics in the family, side by side with Anglicans. Later on, Walter Pater had thoughts of taking orders in the Church of England. He and two friends, it is said, 'spent their pocket money on books of devotion and stole away from school games to attend service at church.' One of his earliest poems was on St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

When he was fourteen Walter Pater went to

King's School, Canterbury. Writing *Emerald Uthwart*, many years after, Pater finds 'for the careful æsthetic observer' a value in the 'delightful physiognomic results' of teaching boys 'their Pagan Latin and Greek under the shadow of mediæval church towers, amid the haunts and the traditions, and with something of the discipline, of monasticism.' He writes of the 'austere beautifully proportioned' cathedral, and the ancient school at its side, and the English boys 'row upon row, with black or golden heads,' repeating Horace in the 'fresh morning,' and especially the boy Emerald, 'whose very dress seems touched with Hellenic fitness to the healthy youthful form.' He says that the place challenged you 'to make moral philosophy one of your acquirements, if you can, and to systematize your vagrant self.' He shows us the boy Emerald, fresh from 'his native world of soft garden touches . . . where everyone did just what he liked,' submitting with 'a kind of genius' for submissiveness to the early hours, 'the confident word of command, the instantaneous obedience expected, the enforced silence, the very games that go by rule, a sort of hardness natural to wholesome English youths when they come together, but here *de rigueur* as a point of good manners.' The 'early hours' which were afterwards to give

the morning, and all that passed in it in his boyhood, 'a disproportionate place there, adding greatly to the effect of its dreamy distance from him at this late time'—these 'early hours' are certainly a memory; but the Pater revealed belongs chiefly to 1892, hardly at all to 1858. From Mr. A. C. Benson we learn that he was not a brilliant boy; he may even have been regarded 'at first as idle and backward.' It has been said that he 'was popular in spite of an entire indifference to games,' and that he was miserable at school and hated games. Being neither a rebel nor a complete 'ordinary boy,' he was probably not happy nor unhappy, but often uncomfortable, and sometimes more so than at others. He has not told us. If, however, Emerald Uthwart's school is the King's School, Canterbury, and Pater was drawing on early impressions, the portrait proves that those impressions were few and weak, or that he had reasons for perverting them. It is not safe to conclude from Emerald Uthwart even that Pater as a boy was uncommonly fond of bed and of turning 'to sleep again, deliberately, deliciously, under the fine old blankets.'

In many ways Uthwart, handsome, alert, and altogether fit and competent, was unlike Pater. But in his seventeenth year he had a sudden intellectual awaking with 'something of the

stir and unction of the coming of love'; of Pater also it is said that his awaking was late, not before he entered the sixth form. It may have been at this time that he chose Lancelot Andrewes' Manual of Devotion as a birthday present for a friend; that he thought of taking orders. Before leaving school, which was a little before his nineteenth birthday (August 4, 1858), he read Ruskin's Modern Painters, or rather the four volumes which had then been published. No boy, even to-day, submits himself to the glow and exuberance of that lofty work and remains the same: of Pater's experience in particular we know nothing. Is it possible that then or in 1857 he wrote the poem on Cassandra quoted by Mr. Wright, with the rhyme of 'word' and 'God'? For a time Ruskin may have lured the youth out into a desire for a glow and exuberance like his own. It is fairly certain that he was writing verses, and quite certain that if they were no better than *Cassandra* he would have endeavoured to destroy all trace of them. Mr. Benson, who thinks Ruskin's style 'natural' and Pater's 'artificial,' believes that Pater 'undoubtedly received a strong impulse from Ruskin in the direction of ornamental expression; and a still stronger impulse in the direction of turning a creative force into the criticism of beautiful

things—a vein of subjective criticism, in fact.' It may have been so, but Pater's early writing is lean, dry, and awkward, without ornament, and unlike Ruskin.

In June, 1858, with a school exhibition of sixty pounds a year for three years, Pater entered Queen's College, Oxford. His elder brother, William Thompson Pater, had become a doctor; his two sisters, under the care of an aunt who took the place of mother to the orphans, had gone to Heidelberg and Dresden, where Walter Pater stayed with them in 1858 and in the long vacations of several successive years. At Heidelberg he is said to have written a story, entitled 'St. Gertrude of Himmelstadt.' This is referred to in Stories in Verse by Land and Sea (1898), the work of an Oxford friend of Pater's, the Rev. M. B. Moorhouse. One of the stories, 'The Rescue: A Tale of a Woman's Courage,' was 'suggested,' says Mr. Moorhouse, 'by a story which an intimate college friend, the late Walter Pater, told me in the days when we were at Oxford together.' It is the story of a young wife appearing as an 'angel form of avenging light' to her warrior husband when he was in desperate straits, and giving strength to his side to conquer.

During Pater's four years at Queen's College Matthew Arnold was Professor of Poetry and

published his book On Translating Homer. Newman, Rector of Dublin University, was lecturing on The Idea of a University. William Morris had just painted the frescoes in the Oxford Union; his Defence of Guenevere was published in the year of Pater's arrival at Oxford. Swinburne was an undergraduate at Balliol and published Rosamund and The Queen Mother. Kingsley's Two Years Ago had appeared in 1857. 1859 was the year of Tennyson's Idylls of the King, Dickens' Tale of Two Cities, and Thackeray's Virginians; and the year of De Quincey's death. In 1860 appeared Ruskin's Unto this Last, and the fifth volume of Modern Painters, together with Owen Meredith's I. cile and George Eliot's Mill on the Floss. Carlyle was publishing Frederick the Great.

But we know little of Pater's reading in those years, apart from his set work, except that he took to metaphysics. He had come from school 'with a tendency to value all things German,' and for a time Mr. W. W. Capes tried in vain to attract him to French literature. He is said to have continued writing verse, including blank verse like the following:—

> Thereat arose a multitudinous flock
> Of eaglets winnowing the airy void.

Mr. Gosse says that a fragment on Coleridge was his 'first essay in composition.' It is also

said that he imitated Kingsley with a story beginning, 'I am going to tell you a beautiful brave story of the old Greeks.' Before his twenty-fifth year, says William Sharp, in the Atlantic Monthly, he practised translating into verse, from the Anthology, for example, from Goethe and de Musset, but destroyed it all.

His classical work attracted the attention of Jowett, at this time Professor of Greek, who said to him once, 'I think you have a mind that will come to great eminence.' His comparative poverty and his unshining yet independent nature made his life a quiet one in the back quadrangle at Queen's. He is said to have been 'a scorner at religion,' but yet to have intended still to take orders: which, it is said, forced some old school-fellows to give him up and afterwards prevent him, by warning the Bishop of London, from carrying out his intention. In 1862 he took a second-class in the final classical school. He remained in Oxford, taking private pupils for a year or two. Then in 1864 he was elected to a Fellowship at Brasenose College and went into rooms—a small sitting-room and a tiny bedroom—at the south-east corner of the front quadrangle, commanding the Radcliffe Camera from an oriel window. According to report, he had won his Fellowship by 'a new, daring philosophy of his own, and a wonderful

gift of style,' which had already earned him a kind of secret celebrity in Oxford. For he was already, since 1863, a member, with his friend, Professor Ingram Bywater, of the Old Mortality, a society which included T. H. Green, Henry Nettleship, Professor Bryce, and Edward Caird. Through it he became acquainted with Swinburne and other men of note. His first paper for the society was 'a hymn of praise to the absolute.' In 1864 he read the essay called 'Diaphaneité,' now printed in *Miscellaneous Studies*. It is an attempt to describe a refined but unworldly, intellectual but simple, character, which seeks 'to value everything at its eternal value, not adding to it, or taking from it, the amount of the influence it may have for or against its own special scheme of life.' Such a one, he thought, was fitter than the exceptional philosopher, saint, and artist, to be 'a basement type'; 'a majority of such would be the regeneration of the world.' It is evident that Pater had been reading Carlyle and George Eliot's Romola, which had just appeared in the Cornhill Magazine; the character was suggested by his friend, C. L. Shadwell, translator of Dante's Purgatorio, and afterwards Provost of Oriel and editor of Pater's posthumous works. With Mr. Shadwell, in 1869, Pater made his first visit to Italy, the Riviera, Pisa

and Florence. He came at the same time under the influence of Goethe, and through Otto Jahn's Life (1866) of Winckelmann. To Winckelmann, one of those who discovered Greece for Goethe and for the world, Pater applied almost exactly the same words as to the typical character in *Diaphaneité*: 'The beauty of the Greek statues was a sexless beauty: the statues of the gods had the least traces of sex. Here there is a moral sexlessness, a kind of ineffectual wholeness of nature, yet with a true beauty and significance of its own.' In the earlier essay a semicolon stood in place of the colon of the first sentence; 'a kind of impotence' came before 'the ineffectual wholeness' and the beauty was 'divine' instead of 'true.' When Pater speaks of Winckelmann multiplying his intellectual force by 'detaching from it all flaccid interests,' renouncing mathematics and law, everything but 'the literature of the arts,' he is perhaps describing in part his own development, in part his desire. There was something of himself in Winckelmann's simplicity of life—'simple without being niggardly; he desired to be neither poor nor rich.' There was something of himself, of Florian Deleal and Emerald Uthwart in the man who 'would remain at home for ever on the earth if he could'; still more in the ideal, expressed at the conclusion, of a kind of 'pas-

sionate coldness,' a nature that wins the secret from all forms of culture, and then 'lets each fall back into its place, in the supreme artistic view of life.'

This thought was further developed in another essay of the following year, afterwards used as a conclusion to *The Renaissance*. To perceive and taste as many as possible of the essential 'virtues' in men, Nature and books, to make the most of 'the counted number of pulses . . . given to us of a variegated dramatic life,' to 'grasp at any exquisite passion' or any experience that sets free the spirit—this is success in life. No theory that would deny us such experience has a claim on us.

Among the claims that may have to be renounced for the sake of artistic perfection is the 'commonplace metaphysical interest.' This renunciation, to some extent, Pater himself was making. A still earlier essay on Coleridge in The Westminster Review of 1866 shows him troubled by metaphysics, but already asking the question which Oscar Wilde was to repeat, 'Who would change the colour or curve of a rose leaf for . . . that colourless, formless, intangible being Plato puts so high?' He was already accepting the relative spirit which strives to see all things as they are in themselves, to find a formula not 'less living and flexible than

life itself,' and before knowing all pardons all. He used to say: 'Don't speak of systems and governments; what is interesting to me is the uniqueness of the individual.' Through this contact with Coleridge he may have acquired an intention, which is attributed to him, of entering the Unitarian ministry: Mr. Gosse tells us that it was abandoned in 1864. It seems to have been a passing thought, for he could write at this time with supreme detachment of Winckelmann's joining the Catholic Church for a bribe: true, he thinks that the loss of 'absolute sincerity' to such a 'transparent' nature must have been a real one; but he, or at least the 'criticism' which he represents, refuses to reject either Winckelmann, who sacrifices something to 'lay open a new sense' and be saved from mediocrity, or the opposite type of Savonarola: 'at the bar of the highest criticism,' he says, 'perhaps Winckelmann may be absolved'; thus he seems to think that a bar exists and absolution is desirable. Mr. Benson tells us that he used to labour to 'clear away the scruples of men who had intended to enter the ministry of the church, and found themselves doubtful of their vocation. He had a special sympathy for the ecclesiastical life. . . .'

Pater's papers on Coleridge and Winckelmann 'made a great sensation in the University.'

He must have been known also by his conversation. But his lectures at first were only to Brasenose men. They have been variously described: to all they were unexpected. Some speak of Pater's careful phrasing, some of his unconventionality and disregard of examinations, others of his power to interest the ordinary undergraduate in Aristotle. It is clear that the best men were arrested or stimulated, and that the others were no worse off than under an ordinary lecturer. He 'never thought of himself as a species of schoolmaster, whose business it was to make men work,' says Mr. Benson. He lectured; he examined his pupils' essays, on subjects chosen not by him but by them, and was particularly careful in criticizing the form of essays submitted to him; he did more, and he did so willingly, only when the pupil was intelligent, awake and eager. He sought neither to influence nor to oppose. Sometimes a pupil joined him for part of a vacation, to work and walk; and Pater was most kind and attentive, but always, it seems, with a cold detachment. Apparently he liked young men, at the river and elsewhere, chiefly as a spectacle for the eye or the mind's eye. Perhaps it was later that he became, as William Sharp says, 'swiftly responsive to youth as youth,' 'interested in an undergraduate simply because joyously youthful and

with an Etonian reputation as a daredevil scapegrace'; 'the reason of this interest in all unconventional and animal life' being that Pater had never been joyously young. Sharp noticed his 'courteous deference' to young and old. Certainly he was very polite to undergraduates, always giving up his own arm-chair to a pupil who came in with an essay, and then saying from the window seat: 'Well, let us see what this is all about.' And so also with other visitors. In a few years' time he took a house with his sisters—No. 2 Bradmore Road—where he used to entertain his friends: he was always planning for them, asking, 'Are you comfortable?' and could do nothing else while they were about. He used to write out the menu cards and arrange the flowers himself, and look after every detail, when he gave a dinner. His own meals were plain to austerity: he neither smoked nor took afternoon tea. As far as he could, he wrote in the mornings, not much in the evenings. He gave as little time as was necessary to College matters and none to discipline, except to soften judgments. A kind of beauty—or of precision and decorum—was observed in everything about him. The story was at least well invented that showed a passman asking Pater, after two terms of Aristotle, 'Why should we be good?' and Pater answer-

ing: 'Because it is so beautiful.' The furniture and wall-paper was the man. Mr. Humphry Ward remembers the rooms 'freshly painted in greenish white,' the three or four line engravings from Michelangelo, Correggio, Ingres, the matting and Eastern carpet and stained border, the 'scanty, bright chintz curtains,' the 'clean clear table,' so unlike other dons' rooms. He kept some dried rose-leaves in a bowl. 'Yes,' said a writer in The Speaker, 'there were indeed rose-leaves on the table set in a wide, open bowl of blue china, and it was just possible to detect their faint smell. The warm blue tone of the room was the first impression one received on entering: the stencilled walls, the cushions of the chairs, the table covers, and the curtains to the mullioned windows that projected over the pavement—all these were blue. And whatever in the room was not blue seemed to be white, or wood in its natural colour, or polished brass. The books in their low neat case seemed all white calf or vellum; above them an alto-relief in plaster showed white, in the corner a pure white Hermes on a pedestal stood with tiny wings outspread. The room was small, but the Gothic window with its bow enlarged it, and seemed to bring something of the outside Oxford into the chamber so small in itself.' It cannot positively be added that there was a dwarf

orange tree in the room, though there may have been red oranges.

Mr. Gosse tells us that it was Pater's delight to surround himself with beautiful objects, yet without any of the instincts of the collector; for the copy of a coin was to him as good as the original. No saying of Pater's that has survived is so expressive as that room: like the print, covers, and lettering of his books, in their first editions, only to behold it calls up the man's spirit.

A year after his paper on Winckelmann, in his essay on *Æsthetic Poetry*, he made a further declaration of that spirit. William Morris' Defence of Guenevere had appeared in Pater's first year at Oxford, to be followed in 1867 by The Life and Death of Jason, and now in 1868 by the first part of The Earthly Paradise. Pater evidently gave himself away gladly to this faint and spectral world, this 'finer ideal, extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal,' this poetry of 'a love defined by the absence of the beloved, choosing to be without hope, protesting against all lower uses of love, barren, extravagant, antinomian.' The criticism is a confession either of instinctive sympathy with this mediæval world of 'reverie, illusion, delirium,' in love and religion, or of an imaginative, histrionic entering into it, for the

time being. The 'sorcerer's moon,' the 'intricate and delirious' colouring, the influence of summer 'like a poison,' the frost like a narcotic, the 'passion of which the outlets are sealed,' the 'strange delirious' part played by Nature—these are Pater's contribution; they are what the poems evoked from him, out of his nature and his reading, in that greenish white chaste room on Oxford mornings. In the next year came his *Leonardo da Vinci*, in the Fortnightly Review, November, 1869; then *Sandro Botticelli* in 1870; then *Pico della Mirandola* and the *Poetry of Michelangelo* in 1871; and in 1873 the volume of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, in which these essays were included with *Aucassin and Nicolette*, *Studies of Luca della Robbia and Joachim du Bellay*, the *Winckelmann*, and a *Preface* and *Conclusion*.

In the preface to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, afterwards called *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, he said that the aim of the student of æsthetics was to define beauty in the most concrete terms possible, to see the object as in itself it really is, or at best as a step towards that, to know 'one's own impression as it really is.' He must have a temperament that is deeply moved by beautiful things, by the best of every kind, whether in the fresh-

ness of an early phase of art or in 'that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence.' He must ask himself what is a song or picture or human being, 'to me'; he must try to disengage the 'virtue' of the object which makes its power of giving pleasure unique. The *Conclusion*, written, as we have seen, in 1868, reinforced this doctrine, offering it not only to the critic and student of æsthetics, but to every man aiming to succeed in life. To come at the greatest possible number of these 'virtues' in men, nature and books, to make the most of 'the counted number of pulses . . . given to us of a variegated dramatic life,' to 'grasp at any exquisite passion,' or any experience that sets free the spirit, were offered to men who were neither artists nor students of æsthetics as constituents of success in life.

A remark of Pater's in this very year, 1873, gives one example of the application of this doctrine. 'Conversation,' says Mr. Gosse, 'turned on ecclesiastical matters, and Pater passed on to a dreamy monologue about the beauty of the Reserved Sacrament in Roman churches, which "gave them all the sentiment of a house where lay a dead friend."' Equally characteristic was his decision against removing some inferior windows from the College chapel:

he would not have it because they 'provided a document of taste,' says Mr. Benson.

In the same desire for variety and novelty of experience he or one of his friends at Brasenose plotted at dinner to drink out of the hollow stem of a hock glass, and used to ride on the top of a cabriolet in order to see over the Devonshire hedges. One of a younger generation at Brasenose proved himself of the sect by eating off the wrong side of a plate when the ordinary way had tired him. . . .

The Renaissance, says Mr. Arthur Symons, 'seems on its appearance in 1873 to have been taken as the manifesto of the so-called "æsthetic school." And, indeed, it may well be compared as artistic prose with the poetry of Rossetti (the Poems had appeared in 1870); as fine, as careful, as new a thing as that, and with something of the same exotic odour about it; a savour in this case of French soil, a Watteau grace and delicacy. Here was criticism as a fine art, written in prose which the reader lingered over as over poetry, modulated prose which made the splendour of Ruskin seem gaudy, the neatness of Matthew Arnold a mincing neatness, and the brass sound strident in the orchestra of Carlyle.'

The book waited four years for a second edition, but its fame and influence were out

of all proportion to its sale. Such work is read and re-read and lent here and there; every copy has a reader and makes at least one convert among the youth, especially among those professionally interested in art and letters.

Pater's reputation had gone beyond the bounds of the University before his first book appeared. Mr. Gosse tells us how Pater's dress 'had been the ordinary academic dress of a don of the period, but in May, 1869, he flashed forth at the private view of the Royal Academy in a new top hat and a silk tie of a brilliant apple-green. This little transformation marked a crisis; he was henceforth no longer a provincial philosopher, but a critic linked to London and the modern arts.' He met the pre-Raphaelites in 1869; their poetry he praised in his essays on *Æsthetic Poetry* and *Dante Gabriel Rossetti;* for Burne-Jones' pictures he had an extreme admiration. Swinburne, it has been said, was 'a not infrequent visitor' at his rooms at Brasenose; but Mr. Watts-Dunton tells me that the two 'knew next to nothing of each other.' Pater was acquainted more or less intimately with Mandell Creighton, Mark Pattison, Mr. Herbert Warren, President of Magdalen, Mr. Edmund Gosse, Mr. Humphry Ward, Mr. Arthur Symons, William Sharp, Lionel Johnson; his chief friends were Mr.

C. L. Shadwell, afterwards Provost of Oriel, Dr. F. W. Bussell, afterwards Vice-Principal of Brasenose. He was kind, considerate, and polite, but, to say the least of it, he 'did not make friends easily'; 'he trifled gracefully and somewhat mysteriously with a companion not entirely in sympathy;' and 'even to his intimates he was often reserved, baffling, and mysterious from a deep-seated reticence and reserve.' To William Sharp, in 1880, he seemed 'neither reserved in manner nor reticent in speech.' He had apparently had 'a period of *épanouissement*, when the ideas that began to crowd thickly into his mind produced a certain want of balance, a paradoxical daring of speech, a certain recklessness of statement.' This did not last. The first impression received from a score of recorded impressions is that he was a man of solitary heart. He could laugh, and that very heartily, as at Mr. A. W. Pinero's Magistrate. He would amuse a friend with clever caricatures of speech and gesture when, for example, he told the tale of Mark Pattison and the burglar: he was most vivid in representing the Rector saying, 'I am a poor old man. Look at me, you can see that I am a very poor man. Go across to Fowler! He is rich, and all his plate is real. He is a very snug fellow, Fowler.' He had, too, an ironical vein, when

he would sometimes prolong perversity to a ridiculous or a baffling extent. It is said that when Pierre Loti was being very much praised, he asked, '"Isn't he rather like Charlotte M. Yonge?" . . . with an apparently outrageous irony in which there was the sting of a perfectly definite and well-aimed criticism.' Extreme instances are wanting, and if remembered would depend very much on Pater's unique manner—whatever that was; but he is said to have spent some time as a young man in living up to his reputation for ironical absurdity, and now and then to have 'rather presumed on the indulgence of his friends in this respect.' Mark Pattison was thinking of him in some such vein when he said, according to the story, that he would not cross the Channel with Pater, 'because he would say that the steamboat was not a steamboat, and Calais was not Calais.' It must have been in this vein, too, that Pater scoffed at those 'horrid pots of blue paint'—the Swiss lakes. Thus Oscar Wilde was made.

He is said to have been a real liker of children and cats, and to have had a 'childlike simplicity' and 'naive joyousness' in his character. Mr. Gosse says that 'a nature so enclosed as his, so little capable of opening its doors to others, must have some outlet of relief. Pater found his outlet in a sort of delicate weird

playfulness. There are animals which sit all day unmoveable, and humped up among the rest of their fellows, and which when all the rest of the menagerie is asleep, steal out upon their slips of greensward and play the wildest pranks in the light of the moon. Pater has often reminded me of some such armadillo or wombat.' . . .

There is nothing in *The Child in the House* to suggest the playful older child known to Mr. Gosse. 'One playful fancy,' he tells us of Pater, 'persisted in so long that even old friends were deceived by it, was the fiction of a group of relations—Uncle Capsicum and Uncle Guava, Aunt Fancy (who fainted when the word "leg" was mentioned), and Aunt Tart (for whom no acceptable present could be found). These shadowy personages had been talked about for so many years that at last, I verily believe, Pater had almost persuaded himself of their existence.'

III

MIDDLE LIFE

How much of Pater's Oxford reputation was due to *The Renaissance*, and how much to his conversation, is not easily decided. No one has told us in what direction his alleged earlier rashness of speech had led him. In so far as the reputation was not a good one, it may have been due to his rashness, as well as to the antipathy and misconception of other kinds of moralists. The rumoured opposition of Jowett to Pater at this time, and the caricature in Mr. W. H. Mallock's New Republic, indicate what that reputation was. Gossip says that Jowett used his influence to keep Pater out of the Proctorship or some other office carrying distinction and emolument, that Pater was aware of it, that for many years the two were estranged. Mr. Benson suggests that 'Jowett either identified Pater with the advanced æsthetic school, or supposed that at all events his teaching was adapted to strengthen a species of Hedonism or modern

Paganism, which was alien to the spirit of the age'; and he says positively: 'Whatever his motives were, he certainly meant to make it plain that he did not desire to see the supposed exponents of the æsthetic philosophy holding office in the University.'

The New Republic, written by an undergraduate of the University, and published in the same year as the second edition of *The Renaissance*, 1877, shows clearly what could be thought of Pater, and probably what many did think. For example, in the first chapter of the fourth book, 'Mr. Rose' talks of 'the effect of the choicer culture of this century on the soul of man,' and of the choicer soul's need of a finer climate than the present, giving as an instance of the choicer soul's suffering a walk in London:—

'Often when I walk about London, and see how hideous its external aspect is, and what a dissonant population throng it, a chill feeling of despair comes over me. Consider how the human eye delights in form and colour, and the ear in tempered and harmonious sounds; and then think for a moment of a London street. Think of the shapeless houses, the forest of ghastly chimney-pots, of the hell of distracting noises made by the carts, the cabs, the carriages; think of the bustling, commonplace, careworn crowds that jostle you; think of an omnibus; think of a four-wheeler. . . .

'I say, as I push my way amongst all the sights and sounds of the streets of our great city, only one thing

ever catches my eye that breaks in upon my mood, and warns me I need not despair.'

'And what is that?' asked Allen, with some curiosity.

'The shops,' Mr. Rose answered, 'of certain of our upholsterers, and dealers in works of art. Their windows, as I look into them, act like a sudden charm on me—like a splash of cold water on my forehead when I am fainting. For I seem there to have got a glimpse of the real heart of things; and as my eyes rest on the perfect patterns (many of which are quite delicious—indeed, when I go to ugly houses, I often take a scrap of some artistic cretonne with me in my pocket as a kind of æsthetic smelling salts) —I say, when I look in at their windows, and my eye rests on the perfect pattern of some new fabric for a chair or for a window curtain, or on some new design for a wall-paper, or on some old china vase—I become at once sharply conscious, Mr. Herbert, that despite the ungenial mental climate of the present age, strange yearnings for and knowledge of true beauty are beginning to show themselves like flowers above the weedy soil; and I remember, amidst the roar and clatter of our streets, and the mad noises of our own times, that there is amongst us a growing number who have deliberately turned their backs on all these things, and have thrown their whole souls and sympathies into the happier art-ages of the past. They have gone back,' said Mr. Rose, raising his voice a little, 'to Athens and to Italy—to the Italy of Leo, and to the Athens of Pericles. To such men the clamour, the interests, the struggles of our own times, become as meaningless as they really are. To them the boyhood of Bathyllus is of more moment than the manhood of Napoleon. Borgia is a more familiar name than Bismarck.' . . .

The insipidity of this conversation reminds me of a story about Pater told by Mr. Thomas Wright, which, whatever its relation to the truth, points to what was supposed to be the truth. He is said to have met a gentleman at Christ Church, named Jackson, in 1877, who was an authority on poetry, sculpture, painting, and music, at the age of twenty-six. Pater was fascinated by him, exclaiming excitedly, 'I am dumbfounded. I will write a book about you.'

'One day' (says Mr. Wright, on Mr. Jackson's evidence), 'Pater, after producing a number of little squares on white paper upon which he had been making notes, said to Mr. Jackson, "See, I told you I would write a book about you, and now I have sucked your veins dry I will begin."

'"There must be no personalities," interrupted Mr. Jackson.

'"Certainly not," followed Pater; "but since I have taken the bloom off the pēach, the fragrance from the rose, the breath from the lily—even as the hyacinth sprang from the blood of Hyacinthus, so shall that I have gleaned from *thee* swell *thy* fame to kiss posterity therewith."'

This is said to have been the origin of *Marius the Epicurean*, which was begun about 1879, and took five or six years to write. Pater is made to address Mr. Jackson as 'Marius,' and one day he said—says Mr. Wright:—

'"My dear Marius! I want you to write me a song for my birthday"; so Mr. Jackson wrote and sent him some lines entitled, "Thou Standest on the Threshold," one stanza of which runs:—

Your darling soul I say is enflamed with love for me;
Your very eyes do move, I cry with sympathy;
Your darling feet and hands are blessings ruled by love
As forth was sent from out the Ark a turtle dove!'

It would be a remarkable thing if Pater were capable of being blinded to the value of this, or of the verses 'written in *Marius* by Richard C. Jackson, November 15, 1885':—

First fruits of labour latest found
With grace enough to charm the hours
Which come and go, one's praise to sound
In ivor towers!

Thou comest where rich flowers abound,
Where ilex-trees all gem the ground,
By golden gate of ivor towers.
Unwritten thoughts are fragrant flowers,
When such within the heart are found,
While books beguile the passing hours
In ivor towers
By love's sweet powers.
You greet me as your Marius! Me
Who swelled for thee life's minstrelsy,
In ivor towers.

I say to thee,
Within my garden I enclose
Your spirit with a damask rose,
Of ivor towers.

The view of himself and his opinions illustrated by Mr. Mallock's caricature and Mr. Jackson's recollections somehow reached Pater. For it was probably this that led him to make a change in *The Renaissance* for the second edition. He omitted the Conclusion, the most personal, the only dogmatic thing in the book, with its doctrine that to attain as many exquisite experiences as possible, to burn always with a hard gem-like flame, to maintain a condition of ecstasy, was 'success in life.' The explanation was given in the third edition in 1888, where the Conclusion was restored with some changes. He had, he says, omitted it, because he conceived it might possibly mislead some of those younger men into whose hands it might fall; the changes were made to bring it closer to his 'original meaning.' He had written that 'high passions' . . . 'ecstasy and sorrow of love, political or religious enthusiasm,' or the 'enthusiasm of humanity' gave the 'quickened sense of life' which meant success. He now wrote of 'great' passions, ecstasy and sorrow of love, and 'the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us' that they 'may give' this quickened sense of life. Where he had said that 'the wisest' spent their life in 'art and song,' he now said

'the wisest, at least among the children of this world'—they were wiser than those who spent it in 'high passions.' These changes show that he did not really mean to undeserve the title of hedonist, which he said produced such a bad effect on the minds of people who don't know Greek, who define a hedonist, as I happen to know, as 'an immoral Greek.' Pater had, in fact, merely made the very slightest of bows to ordinary opinion, without even an ironical sacrifice of sincerity.

Whatever effect other people's opinions of *The Renaissance* had, they did not silence Pater. But he had passed thirty-five, and his subjects changed a little, his writing became less elaborately sensuous and more intellectual and humane. He wrote on Wordsworth, Charles Lamb, on Shakespeare's Measure for Measure and Love's Labour's Lost, on The Bacchanals of Euripides, on The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture, and *The Marbles of Ægina*. He lectured at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on *Demeter and Persephone*, and printed his lectures. He wrote an essay on *Romanticism*, which is as unlike the Conclusion of *The Renaissance* as possible, being confined entirely to art and literature, and with the emotions inspired and satisfied by them at a desk or, at most, in an arm-chair. His eyes were turned more and

more to sculpture rather than to painting. *The School of Giorgione*, afterwards added to *The Renaissance*, shows him as a subtle connoisseur, inspired by art and not by life. In the year after the second edition of *The Renaissance* he wrote an 'imaginary portrait,' *The Child in the House*, his first published narrative. Between 1870 and 1880 he wrote on an average two essays a year, and published them fairly regularly in The Fortnightly Review and Macmillan's Magazine.

Pater's residence and duties at Oxford did not make a large output of literary work easily possible; for a man of his rather low vitality and habit of slow composition they made it impossible. He used to make notes on separate pieces of paper relating to any subject under his attention, and with these before him he worked. For greater ease of correction and addition he wrote only on the alternate lines of ruled paper. The revised work was copied, again only on alternate lines, for further elaboration. Sometimes, like Tennyson, he then had the essay printed because in that state it could best be clearly and dispassionately re-examined. His *Giorgione* was set up in this way for final correction. At one time he wrote daily for practice, especially translations from Tacitus, Livy, Plato, Aristotle, Goethe, Lessing, Winckelmann, Flaubert, and

St. Beuve. On the other hand it is reported that he would not read Stevenson and Mr. Kipling lest he should be upset or submerged by them. He wrote for only three or four hours in one day, and could hardly have written more while he was still both tutor and lecturer.

When he was not engaged in writing or college work he sometimes found himself among literary and artistic people in London. In one such group William Sharp met him, about the year 1880, at the house of Mr. George T. Robinson in Gower Street. Here assembled 'poets, novelists, dramatists, writers of all kinds, painters, sculptors, musicians, and all manner of folk, pilgrims from or to the only veritable Bohemia . . . delightfully promiscuous gatherings . . . due in part to the brilliant young scholar-poet, Miss A. Mary F. Robinson (Madame Darmesteter, afterwards Madame Duclaux).' The yet unborn Fiona Macleod met Pater and made friends with him. He reports Pater's heavy walk and 'halting step,' especially when tired, 'suggesting partial lameness'; his fear of snakes; his 'vague dread of impending evil' and dislike of 'walking along the base of dark and rugged slopes, or beneath any impendent rock.' He says that certain flowers affected Pater's imagination 'so keenly that he could not smell them with pleasure; and that while the

white jonquil, the gardenia, and the syringa actually gave him pain, the meadowsweet generally gave him a sudden fugitive sense of distant pastures, and twilit eves and scattered hamlets.' Pater said about this scent: 'On an evening like this there is too much of it. It is the fault of nature in England that she runs too much to excess. Well, after all, that is a foolish thing to say. There is always something supremely certain about nature's waywardness.' I repeat this with some hesitation because I feel that some of the foolishness of the remark may be due to the reporter. At the same time it appears likely that with this young poet Pater was as easy and expansive as he ever could be. He had met numbers of poets or received presentation copies of their works. These, says Sharp, he kept out of tenderness. He had also many poems in manuscript, which made him say that, if it were practicable, he would read all poetry for the first time in the handwriting of the poet, because there was always, for him, an added charm when he could do so, an atmosphere: he spoke even of the joy there would be in reading Michelangelo's or Leonardo's letters in the original; and he displayed the same kind of refinement in saying that he had to read Poe in Baudelaire's translation because the original was so rough.

Pater refreshed himself by longer travels than to Gower Street or Burlington House. Though he never spoke any language but his own, he went again and again with his sisters to Italy and to the north of France for several weeks at a time. His *Art Notes in North Italy*, and *Some Great Churches in France*, reveal him during some moments of his travels. He makes notes of mountains, old towns, churches and their music, pictures, sculpture and iron work, the old things in the sacristies, 'like sacred priestly thoughts visibly lingering there in the half-light.' He speaks of the sacristies again in reviewing Ferdinand Fabre's Toussaint Galabru: 'Every traveller to Italy,' he says, 'has felt the charm of these roomy sacristies, admitted to which for the inspection of some ancient tomb or fresco one is presently overcome by their reverend quiet; the people coming and going there, devout or at least on devout business, their voices at half-pitch, not without a touch of humour in what seems to express like a picture the best side and the really ideal side, midway between the altar and the home, of the ecclesiastical life.'

But not until near the end of his life did he begin to make direct use of his travel notes and impressions. Then he could speak as an 'experienced visitor,' as one of 'those who are

knowing in the matter,' when, for example, he found the painter Moretto 'in the little church of San Clemente . . . still "at home" to his lovers.' As one of those 'interested in the curiosities of ritual,' he mentions the reserved Eucharist 'hanging suspended in a pyx, formed like a dove,' at Amiens.

He used to tire himself with walking, and in a letter to Mr. Gosse from Azay-le-Rideau spoke of the great pleasure they always had in adding to their experiences of 'these French places,' and of returning, 'always a little tired,' but with pleasant memories of stained glass, old tapestries, and new flowers. The letter was written in 1877. Perhaps the tiredness warned him that it was easy for him to do too much. When, therefore, some time before 1880, he was about to begin work on *Marius the Epicurean*, he decided to give up his tutorship. This he did in 1880, though it reduced his regular income, and his small earnings from the magazines were to be even less than before. Perhaps he had been giving a smaller and smaller part of his time to tutorial work; at least he perceived, when his resignation was accepted, that he had not been indispensable, perhaps rather barely sufficient, at his post.

He did not give up lecturing, nor a close connection with the College. He held the office of

Dean until his death. Mr. Benson tells us that he never failed, on Sunday morning or evening, to occupy the Dean's stall next the altar in chapel—'a stall dignified by a special canopy and an exalted desk.' The ancient ceremonies peculiar to the College pleased him. 'It was observed that though kneeling was painful to him, he always remained on his knees, in an attitude of deep reverence, during the whole administration of the Sacrament. Indeed, his reverent and absorbed appearance in chapel will be long remembered by those to whom he was a familiar figure. His large pale face, his heavy moustache and firm chin, his stoop, his eyes cast down on his book in a veritable *custodia oculorum*—all this was deeply impressive, and truly reflected the solemn preoccupation which he felt.'

IV

LATER WRITINGS

After 1880, when he gave up his lectureship at Brasenose, Pater published nothing until 1885, the year of *Marius the Epicurean*. Apparently those years were given up chiefly to the writing of *Marius*, and in 1882 he wintered in Rome, presumably for the sake of the book. No other work belonging to these years is known except the essay on Rossetti. This was written in 1883, and, still more than the *Giorgione* and other essays written after the first edition of *The Renaissance*, it is a piece of intellectual connoisseurship, inspired almost entirely by the poet immediately under his notice. There is very little of Rossetti in the essay, and very little of Pater. Already, with *The Child in the House*, he had begun to put into fiction what he had used to put into criticism, more or less conventional in form, of art and literature. If he had noticed the weakness of the novice in *The Child in the House* he must

have hoped to overcome it in the long labour of *Marius the Epicurean*. Half-way through it he seems to have had misgivings. Visions of many smaller pieces of work were attracting him; he turned away from them, because he regarded this Imaginary Portrait as a 'sort of duty.' When at last it was finished it was not so much one long study as several short ones. It was, in fact, so written that with very little change several of its chapters might have been printed separately as magazine essays. The unfinished *Gaston de Latour*, designed to be a similar portrait, was so printed.

Marius is a series of studies of physical and spiritual life at Rome under Marcus Aurelius. 'Readers,' says Lionel Johnson in Post Liminium, 'accustomed by long experience to use *Marius* for a text-book—exact, precise, rigorous, well warranted and attested—of the Antonine age, do not need to be told that Mr. Pater never writes without his facts and evidences.' Yet it was possible for another critic, Mr. Edward Hutton, to say that 'in *Marius the Epicurean* Walter Pater gave us a book profound and simple, bounded by the great refusals of an artist, perfect in prose, stooping to nothing, having the dignity of a great poem, and the thoughtfulness that is characteristic of the writers of the Augustan age.'

It was, then, a poem and a text-book at once, or something of a poem and something of a text-book. Pater's aim, however, had been to portray a young man in an age something like our own, and a 'sort of religious phase possible for the modern mind,' as well as for Marius, the young man in the book. Marius, like Florian Deleal and Emerald Uthwart, is a version of Walter Pater, grave and refined, intellectually curious, yet ceremonious and with what has been called 'a religious bias'; more attractive than Pater, physically handsome, and having a certain faintly gallant beauty of nature. Born to the venerable and outworn religion of paganism, he advances by philosophic steps, minutely described by Pater, towards Christianity, with the aid of a striking Christian comrade and of a soul that was 'naturally Christian': by a mere accident he dies a Christian.

The exquisite workmanship of its parts, the interest of its central theme to an age that 'longed to be religious,' gained at once respect and admiration. Writing of Pater as a boy, as '"the clever one of the family," not with a vivacious cleverness but a shy brooding faculty of gradual and exact receptiveness and one of which the eye is the special organ,' Professor Dowden looks forward and forecasts—with the help of Pater's books and particularly *Marius*

—his spiritual journey through life. It may be taken, for the moment, as a bird's-eye view of author and hero. 'If,' writes Professor Dowden in The New Liberal Review, 'Pater is a seeker for truth, he must seek for it with the eye, and with the imagination penetrating its way through things visible; or if truth comes to him in any other way, he must project the truth into colour and form, since otherwise it remains for him cold, loveless, and a tyranny of the intellect, like that which oppressed out of existence his Sebastian van Storck. We may turn elsewhere to read of "the conduct of the understanding." We learn much from Pater concerning the conduct of the eye. Whatever his religion may hereafter be, it cannot be that of Puritanism, which makes a breach between the visible and the invisible. It cannot be reached by purely intellectual processes; it cannot be embodied in a creed of dogmatic abstractions. The blessing which he may perhaps obtain can hardly be that of those who see not and yet have believed. The evidential value of a face made bright by some inner joy will count with him for more than syllogism, however correct in its premises and conclusions. A life made visibly gracious and comely will testify to him of some hidden truth more decisively than any supernatural witnessing known only by report. If he is

impressed by any creed, it will be by virtue of its living epistles, known and read of all men. He will be occupied during his whole life with a study not of ideas apart from their concrete embodiment, not of things concrete apart from their inward significance, but with a study of *expression*—expression as seen in the countenance of external nature, expression in Greek statue, mediæval cathedral, Renaissance altar-piece, expression in the ritual of various religions, and in the visible bearing of various types of manhood.'

Epicureanism, Stoicism, Christianity, appear in *Marius*, embodied in various types of manhood. The doctrine of *The Renaissance* was modified by the Epicureanism of Marius, so that the fulness of successful life might be understood to mean not pleasure, but sincere, strenuous forms of 'energy, variety, choice of experience,' and 'whatever form of human life . . . might be heroic, impassioned, ideal.' Even so, Pater took care to point out that he *did* mean the book 'to be more anti-Epicurean' than it had seemed to William Sharp: he might have been satisfied to know that his work had 'something of that power for God which one associates with the more excellent books of devotion—with Thomas à Kempis and the mystics'; yet he could not have been altogether surprised to hear

it said of Marius that 'his faith, awoken through his senses, through eye and ear, preserved no power, and the act of quiet heroism, which brought on his death, would have been just as certainly performed if he had never seen the King in his beauty, nor beheld the land that was still for him very far off.' It certainly contains no picture as interesting as that of Pater himself, Fellow of Brasenose, kneeling during the whole administration of the Sacrament in chapel, nor much illuminates the mystery of that picture.

In the year of *Marius the Epicurean*, 1885, Pater took a house in Kensington; there—at 12 Earl's Terrace—he spent his vacations for the next eight years, living 'practically' on his official income and literary earnings, without luxury, but in quiet and solid comfort; 'he made many new friends and expanded in many directions,' says Mr. A. C. Benson. He used to go to services at Catholic and high Anglican churches. It is asserted that he 'revelled in the gorgeous scenes of St. Alban's, Holborn, which was just then at the height of its reputation for ornate services, and the principal Roman Catholic chapels. He delighted in high altars banked with flowers.' On the same authority it is said that he frequented a certain 'Monkery of rich men' at Walworth, called St. Austin's

Priory, which had been founded by 'a very wealthy High-Church clergyman.' Mr. R. C. Jackson was one of those who laboured there in preparing young men for Holy Orders and relieving the poor. Watching a young friend 'arrayed in scarlet cassock, and cotta of rich point lace, and carrying high the handsome silver gilt cross at the head of the gorgeous processions,' here in this 'freer air' Pater could breathe.

Furthermore, and above all, he and Mr. Jackson used to frequent the Greek cemetery at Norwood, which Pater called 'Athens in London,' because it contained many costly tombs of white marble. The pilgrims bore with them old editions of Homer, Plato, Pindar and Sappho, and to hold the multitude of the books they carried a portmanteau. On the steps of one of the tombs they emptied the precious portmanteau. They spread the volumes out. Sometimes they read them aloud; sometimes they sang old Greek songs to the birds of the cemetery—because the birds contain 'the souls of the ancient gods.'

This story is like a daring imitation of parts of The New Republic, indicating perhaps not so much what Pater was, as what he might have been, had Providence been personally interested in making him absurd.

Whether this be exactly true or not, Pater's productivity increased, especially after 1889,

when he began reviewing for newspapers and magazines, for The Guardian, The Athenæum, The Pall Mall Gazette, Macmillan's Magazine, The Nineteenth Century, The Daily Chronicle, and The Bookman. First of all he wrote four more Imaginary Portraits. Three of these, *Sebastian van Storck*, *Denys l'Auxerrois*, and *Duke Carl of Rosenmold*, resembled *Marius*, in that they were studies of an age or phase through a single representative fictitious personality—a Dutchman of Spinoza's time, a German prince of the age before Lessing and Goethe, a mediæval Frenchman like Dionysus in exile; the fourth, *A Prince of Court Painters*, was a study of Watteau, from the point of view of a young woman of his native place, who admired him and kept a diary. In so far as they are deliberate embodiments of an age or philosophy or movement in a human character, and neither more nor less, this class of studies may be called peculiarly Pater's own. He himself thought the four Imaginary Portraits his 'best written book,' adding, 'it seems to me the most natural.' Mr. Arthur Symons agrees that they show Pater's 'imaginative and artistic faculties at their point of most perfect vision,' but sees in them, apparently, the beginning of a taint of naturalness which was unnatural to Pater.

At one time another set of Imaginary Portraits was being planned: the subject of one was to have been Moroni's 'Tailor.' Only three were written, of which none belonged to the same typical class as *Sebastian van Storck* and *Duke Carl*. *Hippolytus Veiled* and *Apollo in Picardy* were stories like *Denys l'Auxerrois*, both classic tales, and one, the *Apollo*, mediævalised like *Denys*: *Emerald Uthwart* was a semi-autobiographical fiction like *The Child in the House*, venturing still further into the common field of the short story writer.

Gaston de Latour has already been mentioned as the fragments of another book like *Marius*. Five chapters were published in 1888, a sixth in 1889; other portions survive in a condition too unfinished for print. It was to have been a parallel study of character to *Marius*, concerning 'the spiritual development of a refined and cultivated mind, capable of keen enjoyment in the pleasures of the senses and the intellect, but destined to find its complete satisfaction in that which transcends both.'

As Marius met Apuleius, Lucian, and Marcus Aurelius, so Gaston met Ronsard, Montaigne, and Giordano Bruno; and the chapters on these meetings abound in lucid portraiture and exposition. It cannot be said that these parts are greater than the whole, because there is no

whole; nor could there have been; for Gaston is but an excuse for Pater to show us something of the men and scenery of sixteenth-century France; there was stuff in him for a short Imaginary Portrait — no more. Pater had too long accustomed himself to short studies for the magazines: his method in the presence of a subject of such magnitude was all but impotent; perhaps his vitality could not stretch to it and endure a continuous strain of any length; *Marius* at least is no argument to the contrary, being not one but many.

In the midst of his Imaginary Portraits, in 1886, Pater wrote *A Study of Sir Thomas Browne*, and soon after, in 1888, an essay *On Style*, which was partly in the nature of a review of Flaubert's Correspondence. The volume entitled *Appreciations* gathered up in 1889 most of his scattered essays of the last twenty years. The first edition included the *Æsthetic Poetry* of 1868; the second edition (1890) substituted for this a review of Octave Feuillet's La Morte, which had been written in 1886. An essay on Prosper Mérimée was delivered as a lecture in that year at Oxford; one on Raphael went through the same process in 1892; that on Pascal was to have been a lecture, but death prevented. 1892 was the year of *The Genius of Plato*, *A Chapter on Plato*, and *Lacedæmon*,

which formed chapters of *Plato and Platonism* in 1893. All the chapters had originally been lectures at Oxford, and retained little touches proclaiming it. He said that they were written for delivery to some young students of philosophy, and were printed with the hope of interesting a larger number of them. The lectures in book form were greeted by Lionel Johnson with a review, beginning: '"Oh, to be reading Greats at B.N.C." is the wish springing from the heart of a Platonic reader fresh from the study of these most winning lectures—lectures full of a golden wisdom, full of a golden humour.' Pater had tried to see the leading principles of Plato's doctrine in close connection with Plato's personality, and with his predecessors. He held up a mirror to Plato's ideas and personality, a mirror as flawless as he could make it, neither concave nor convex, and without a mist, though the holder's hand was not invisible; he had himself done, as he advised the young scholar to do—followed Plato's thought 'intelligently but with strict indifference,' except in so far as he traced the influence of predecessors. It is like *Marius* without fiction; its human interest is as great; its documentation certainly not more oppressive. Pater preferred it to all his other writings. Jowett offered his congratulations.

Plato and Platonism was the last of the books published in his lifetime. The next year, 1894, was the last of his life; the publication of *The Age of Athletic Prizemen* and *Some Great Churches in France* preceded his death, that of *Pascal* followed it.

Pater had given up his house at Kensington in 1893, and had taken one at Oxford—64 St. Giles'. He had become physically rather feeble by the time he was fifty; his more positive charm had long since departed, having been at its best between twenty-five and thirty-five. His kindliness was seldom disturbed, though he avoided mere humility as much as he did argument. Nothing shows his kindliness more than his reviewing, signed and unsigned. He was most liberal in praise, and where he could not praise he would, for example, speak of certain poems as 'a series of pleasant afterthoughts on human life in what may be called its spring colours.' And this, too, without any essential stultification: so that when he reviewed Oscar Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray, he did not omit to say that Lord Henry Wotton had 'too much of a not very really refined world in and about him.' He was himself extremely sensitive to criticism. He might, in fact, have been purposed not to offend anybody whatever. He was the same now in speech. To some his

gentleness and quiet were astonishing; his shy movements and unwillingness to look at people in passing earned him, probably from undergraduates, the title of 'Judas.' 'A kind of placid piety, an inner content,' was always manifest in him. Yet he did not always find it easy to be gracious to women. He did not talk much, but enough.

Descriptions of Pater often betray attempts to prove that the describers were observant. It is certain that he was a short, somewhat bent, and sluggish man, with broad shoulders, a bald head, large pale face, heavy jaw, heavy trimmed moustache, and eyes often animated, c lightest hazel; that his dress was most decorous, and often included a silk hat and an apple-green tie; that he carried 'the neatest of gold-topped umbrellas.' These things did not announce like a trumpet what had been concealed as 'Mr. Pater's private virtues, the personal charm of his character, the brightness of his talk, the warmth of his friendship, the devotion of his family life.' Pater's 'weary courtesy' and kindness towards a friend did not prevent an impression that 'he would have liked to lavish sympathy and even affection, but was frightened of the responsibility and unequal to the effort.' He was a self-conscious, imperfectly expressive man, and the portrait of him now current is a

combination of what he appeared to be with what, out of his books, he was judged to be.

He died on July 30, 1894, from heart failure, not long after his apparent recovery from rheumatic fever and pleurisy. He was buried at Holywell Cemetery, Oxford. His *Greek Studies* were collected and published in 1895, with a preface saying that those on sculpture belonged to a projected but far from completed work which was to have included essays on Phidias and the Parthenon, and an Introduction to Greek Studies.

Another posthumous volume, *Miscellaneous Studies*, was also published in 1895. All but some fragments of *Gaston de Latour* appeared in 1896. Nine reviews from The Guardian were made into another book for private circulation, in 1896, for publication in 1901. It is understood that the unrevised fragments surviving in manuscript will not be published.

V

POINT OF VIEW

THE following pages are of no avail if they do not show that nothing can be known of Pater apart from his books. After a quiet and early-orphaned boyhood, without games, without any recorded emotional events, he went to Oxford, and was henceforward to leave it only for brief intervals until his death. He lived the celibate and sedentary life of the ordinary don. Except in his inner life, so far as is known, he met with no adventures, ran no risks, never suffered. He was never before the County Court, never benighted on a mountain, never horse-whipped. What happened to him 'happened in the heart,' which was inaccessible. When he speaks in dreamy monologue about the beauty of the Reserved Sacrament and how it gives the Roman churches all the sentiment of a house where a dead friend lies, it arouses curiosity as to whether Pater had experienced the loss of a friend. The phrase suggests 'a dead friend'

as part of the stock-in-trade of an artist—like a rustic bridge or a crescent moon. This suggestion may delude us, and it certainly will if it persuades us to think of Pater as callous or unreal in an extraordinary degree.

For the last hundred years ideas and the material of ideas have come to the reading classes mainly through books and bookish conversation. Their ideas are in advance of their experience, their vocabulary in advance of their ideas, and their eyelids 'are a little weary.' They think more of cold than those who have to feel it. They are aware of all the possible vices by the time their blood has chilled and they have understood that they are old. The passions seem to them to belong to a golden age of the past, and it is of their ghosts that they sing. Since everything is an illusion they have no illusions. Not even beauty deceives them. Beauty, says Pater in the preface to *The Renaissance*, is like all other qualities presented to human experience: it is relative. He is, above all men, 'the æsthetic critic,' willing—or compelled—to give up the common grey or purple-patched experience for one that clicks incessantly with maybe faint but certainly conscious sensations. He regards everything, in art, nature and human life, 'as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations.' He

writes for those whose education becomes complete in proportion as their susceptibility to these sensations increases in depth and variety. His qualification is that he has a temperament which is 'deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects'; his end is reached when he has disengaged the virtue by which a thing in art, nature or human life, produced its impression of beauty or pleasure. It is not enough to be capable of leaving his mistress' arms to write a sonnet about her eyebrow. In fact, such a one would hardly be an æsthetic critic at all; it would be better that he should first write the sonnet and then proceed to her arms for verification. The æsthetic critic will hardly have time for the passions except of others. There is an austerity about his life. His virtues and his vices must be fugitive and cloistered. He must beware of the bestial waste of nature, the violent, brief passion and the long languors following.

Pater lived a sober, almost ascetic life at Oxford, varied by tours in continental churches and galleries with his sisters. Yet his was the head upon which all 'the ends of the world are come,' 'the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the Middle Age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the

Borgias.' Pater liked to think of the sins of the Borgias: they had enriched the pageantry of life by which he lived; and with the help of them and of Swinburne's Faustine and Dolores he made his most famous piece of prose. He did not recommend their sins, or any kind of sin. 'He spoke once with great gravity and seriousness of one whom he had known, whom he thought to be drifting into dangerous courses, and expressed a deep desire to help or warn him, or at all events, to get a warning conveyed to him.' In some frames of mind he may have condemned the sins of the Borgias, as a eugenist would, and he does say that 'the spirit of controversy lays just hold' of wicked popes and the like: he would certainly have condemned them in a contemporary, because they are so inconvenient, causing pain, vulgar laughter, scandal, uncomfortable moments when women or strangers are present, and so on. There is no reason to suppose that he disapproved of the ten commandments or the moral ideals of the middle-class, though he would never have ascended a pulpit to recommend them. He lived a quiet life with books and pictures, and he saw good of one kind or another in everything. A thing might pain or disgust or sadden him, but in his pensive citadel he believed this was better than to feel nothing at all. He was,

I suppose, not inclined to throw away time in such general emotions as regret or indignation, especially over the past, nor did he pretend to do so. A great many men like to read about the sins of the Borgias or of the Joneses, to see a little real sin or what they regard as such, and to enjoy some at discreet intervals; but they do not in general name these things among their recreations when talking in the bosom of their family or writing for Who's Who. Even Pater probably suppressed something. He had a conscious, or more likely unconscious ideal of himself which his writing was not allowed to misrepresent. Even so, sin appears on his pages for the most part as a beautiful abstraction: there is no vision portrayed of those temptations of the scholar in his 'dreamy tranquillity,' such as visited Abelard's world of shadows. He was still more attracted to the pure, the wholesome, the refined, the delicate, if, at his distance, he distinguished them. In *The House Beautiful*, he says, 'the saints too have their place.' In his mind, as, according to his opinion, in *The Renaissance* generally, there are 'no exclusions'; 'whatsoever things are comely,' all are reconciled 'for the elevation and adorning' of his spirit; he recognises no essential incompatibility between any really beautiful things, between the freshness of a

youthful art and the 'subtle and delicate sweetness' of a 'refined and comely decadence.' He hardly distinguishes between life and art: as they reach his mirror they are alike. Thus he speaks of the 'life of refined pleasure and action in the conspicuous places of the world,' as if it were a kind of pictorial art by a greater than Bellini or Titian. Yet, again, in an age like that of Pericles or Lorenzo the Magnificent, he sees the fullest beauty, where artists, philosophers, men of action, all communicate in a spirit of 'general elevation and enlightenment.' There is nothing which he cannot enjoy when it is in focus, and only a faintly surviving human weakness enables him to choose one thing rather than another. He is a spectator. His aim is to see; if he is to become something it is by seeing.

In the earliest of his printed writings—in *Diaphaneité*, written at twenty-seven, in the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, and in the essay on Winckelmann, which belong to the two following years—Pater had not quite reached this position of spectator. *Diaphaneité* aimed at presenting a type of character which 'would be the regeneration of the world,' if there were ever a majority of such. Nor was this a cultured type. In its inspired simplicity and crystal clearness it had the range and seriousness with-

out the strain and over-consciousness of culture. Yet he thought this simplicity 'characteristic of the repose of perfect culture,' possibly attainable by the man 'who has treated life in the spirit of art.' The essay is obscure. It is not clear how perfect culture can ever equal the genius of simplicity; for he admits that in Goethe it was a mere white thread of light separable from the rest of his nature. The one example of this type which he names is Charlotte Corday. Not towards this direct simplicity, surely, was Pater advancing, in his part of æsthetic critic.

Can it be that Pater was learning even then how for most of us there is only one chance in the life of the spirit and intellect, as he says himself, how circumstances prevent the right use of it? It is more likely that he believed this one chance to be already behind him.

In the next year he was more a spectator. Thinking of the noble attitudes of men—heroes of novels—in their strife with circumstance, he asked whether men would fret against their chains if they could see at the end 'these great experiences,' these noble attitudes, these tragical situations which thrilled the Fellow of Brasenose. That is nearly pure spectatorship. One more step, and he would bid the dying gladiator be comforted by the stanzas of Childe Harold.

At least we may be sure that those noble attitudes would be impossible to the man of culture, helped by philosophy to see 'the passion, the strangeness, the dramatic contrasts of life.'

A year later, in the Conclusion, he seemed to be pausing or returning; he was still uncertain; or was it simply that he was a little more consciously addressing others, men of different temperaments and degrees of vitality? What he said now was that the end of life was experience, the largest number of the keenest sensations, the 'getting' as many pulsations as possible into 'the given time.' He did not explain 'the given time.' The variety of experience hinted at was infinite, including passion, the pursuit of knowledge, the life of the senses. The objects might be colours and odours or 'the face of one's friend.' He spoke of 'the splendour of our experience' and its 'awful brevity,' and the lack of time for theories about the objects of it. And yet one had to be sure that the passion—if passion one chose or had thrust upon one—really was passion, and really did yield the full number of pulsations, which meant a considerable wisdom and 'looking before and after.' But at the end Pater decided that the 'poetic passion,' 'the love of art for its own sake,' had most to offer. 'The love of art for its own sake'—connoisseurship—spectatorship—is

deliberately set first, before philosophy, before love, before 'the various forms of enthusiastic activity.' This opinion was not altered, in the year before Pater's death, for the reprint (sixth thousand, 1893) of *The Renaissance*. He arrived at it when he was twenty-nine, when love of art might seem to have competitors offering more immediate and more inexorable sensations. He left it standing without a comment when he was fifty-four—was it as a document of taste?

The man who could write *The Renaissance* did well in choosing before everything else the love of art for its own sake, as what could give him the fullest life, the largest number of sensations possible to his temperament in the given time. No reader of the essay on Winckelmann could have doubted the wisdom of the choice if he remembered in particular the passage where Pater speaks of friendships 'containing only just so much passion and physical excitement as may stimulate the eye to the finest delicacies of colour and form.' Whether the author knew those friendships might remain uncertain, but not whether they pleased his imagination. He seems not merely to be thinking of Winckelmann when he mentions, as representing the wholly Greek element in Plato, the 'brilliant youths' of the 'Lysis,' 'still uninfected by any spiritual sickness, finding the end of all endeavour in the

aspects of the human form, the continual stir and motion of a comely human life.'

'Youth is for him the most beautiful of pictures, or rather of statues. His words about it summon figures of marble into the mind, and with them a far-off wistful onlooker—Walter Pater. With that passage where he mentions the youths of the 'Lysis,' or another where he speaks of men of the Renaissance welcoming in ancient art the 'more liberal mode of life' proposed by it, a life of the senses and the understanding so facile and direct, compare Borrow's thought about youth:—

> . . . I bethought me that a time would come when my eyes would be bleared, and, perhaps, sightless; my arms and thighs strengthless and sapless; when my teeth would shake in my jaws, even supposing they did not drop out. No going awooing then, no labouring, no eating strong flesh, and begetting lusty children then; and I bethought me how, when all this should be, I should bewail the days of my youth as misspent, provided I had not in them founded for myself a home, and begotten strong children to take care of me in the days when I could not take care of myself; and thinking of these things, I became sadder and sadder, and stared vacantly upon the fire till my eyes closed in a doze.

Or compare Keats in two different moods; first in the Ode to a Nightingale, thinking of

> The weariness, the fever and the fret
> Here, where men sit and hear each other groan; . . .

and, again, where he shows us Lamia:—

> She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
> Charioting foremost in the envious race,
> Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
> And fell into a swooning love of him.

By comparison, Pater's youths are like angels in marble. He sees them from outside and far away. He, he cannot be thought of as being brought into contact with the 'pride of human form' and at the same time being reconciled to the spirit of Greek sculpture by fervent friendships. Nor does he comment on Winckelmann's notion that those who are observant of beauty only in women seldom have 'an impartial, vital, inborn instinct for beauty in art,' except to say that it is 'characteristic.' He is far away but wistful. Out of all Hellenic art he is inclined to confess that he would save, if he had to choose, the Panathenaic frieze of mounted young men, and their 'colourless, unclassified purity of life.' The 'white light' and characterlessness, the freedom from the accidental influences of life, which he admires in the victorious wrestler with hands uplifted, again suggest an angel. He sees in the spirit of youth that 'moral sexlessness, a kind of ineffectual wholeness of nature,' by which he had distinguished his ideal character in *Diaphaneité*. He admires; he may perhaps envy, but from a great distance,

for he comes at youth only through Winckelmann, Greece and sculpture. This telescope does not spiritualise. Pater has no sense but vision, and he can adapt to it all things presented to him. He saw in the Greeks a people whose thoughts were always ready to be transformed into objects of the senses, whose religion could transform itself into an artistic ideal. Of this quality which he saw in the Greeks he himself had something and desired more.

The main distinction between Greek and mediæval Christian art, as it seemed to Pater, lay in this quality. He describes the forms of sense struggling vainly to express the thoughts of a painter like Angelico. Yet in the year after *Winckelmann*, in writing *Æsthetic Poetry*, he was entering into the 'fever dream' of the mediæval cloister, the 'reign of reverie,' the 'medicated air' and 'prolonged somnambulism' of Provençal love poems, the 'reverie, illusion, delirium,' of mediæval religion and love. He was discovering that even in mediæval hymn-writers there were a hundred sensuous images to one moral or spiritual sentiment. As he shows us the hard physical beauty of the Greek youth, through Winckelmann's eyes, so he shows us this mediæval world through William Morris'. He even enters into this world with something that looks at times like bettering the abandon-

ment of the master. The words delirium, delirious, feverish, narcotic, wild, convulsed, strange, are rather more than merely descriptive of The Defence of Guenevere, which was under review; and when he speaks of night terrors and the splendour of 'things of the morning' after, he seems to claim experience; but less so when he tells with what 'reinforced brilliancy and relief' the sensible world 'comes to one' after the tension of nerve begotten by a passion with no outlet. These things prove nothing about Pater except that he was displaying with rare unconsciousness the effect of another personality. The book of poems meant for him a great experience. He could, indeed, say of one poem in it that the 'delirium' there reached its height with a singular beauty which was reserved perhaps for the few; but that was an unwonted detachment. If he was a solitary, remote spectator of life, he could be intimate and sympathetic with a book. He gave himself up to The Defence of Guenevere, or to what he was able to see in it. He made it his business to give the poems a background coloured from his own mediæval reading. In the end the essay bore a relation to Morris' poems like that borne by Keats' sonnet to the Elgin Marbles, or Wordsworth's sonnet to Westminster Bridge. It is not necessary to have been on the bridge

to enjoy the poem, nor does the poem affect the bridge. Yet Pater's essay would probably not have been written but for The Defence of Guenevere, nor anything like it. He dipped himself into the dyes of the book; only, some of them would not take. He regarded antiquarianism as vain if called to make an actual revival of another age, and would not himself—nor have others—try to be 'as if the Middle Age, the Renaissance, the eighteenth century had not been.' He said with perhaps more conviction than had yet been put into the idea: 'The composite experience of all the ages is part of each one of us.' There are times when this is apparently more true of Pater than that the composite is always something unique: he shows the side which he has in common with the Middle Ages or with Morris' decorative dreamy view of them, but not much more. He is seen to be now this, now that; the whole man is not easily visible: that he is many is more certain than that he is one. And yet the man himself is powerful enough to give a sensuous value to ideas. This essay on *Æsthetic Poetry* is richly sensuous, by reason of its ideas rather than its concrete images, which are few by comparison.

His essay on Leonardo da Vinci is a year later than that on *Æsthetic Poetry*. Already Pater is 'a lover of strange souls'; his task

is to analyse for himself the impression made on him by the work of Leonardo. Though his subject is a famous man, though he has to handle much concrete material, often employ narrative, these thirty pages are the quintessence of Pater. The essay is so much his own that lifeless objects mentioned in it have value which they would not have in another place. It abounds in beautiful objects, pictures, images, drinking vessels, instruments of music, needlework, a long 'reed-like' cross, precious stones; but so might an auctioneer's catalogue. These were things valued by the men and women of the essay, once adorning their halls, or lying in their workshops, or intimately connected with their dress or their hair. Pater also values them for 'filling the common ways of life with the reflexion of some far-off brightness.' The men and women are all playing or working in some exquisite or striking manner. One constructs models in relief of women smiling; he buys caged birds and sets them free, follows people possessing some curious beauty about the streets, can bend a horse-shoe like a coil of lead, is reputed to have protracted the expression on a woman's face for a portrait by the presence of mimes and flute-players. The word 'strange' abounds. There are other words which combine with it in the ultimate

effect—refined, graceful, hieratic, delicate, fine, curious, precise, exquisite, dainty, grace, mystery. Another man might call a cross 'reed-like,' a woman 'languid,' without the word being reflected back to him so as to give something of itself to him as he has given something of himself to it; but Pater could not, or did not. He describes a drawing of a child, 'with parched and feverish lips, but much sweetness in the loose, short-waisted childish dress, with necklace and *bulla*, and in the daintily bound hair.' These words are inadequate to present the child to one who has not seen the drawing, but in their place, and with the help of 'daintily,' and of the 'sweetness in the loose, short-waisted childish dress,' and of the 'parched and feverish,' we are given a strong impression of the man who used the words. So, too, in the sentence where he speaks of the illegitimate boy, Leonardo, being 'delicately' brought up among the 'true children' of the noble house, and having 'the keen, puissant nature' which the 'love-child' of a man's youth often has. It was impossible that he should paint each picture as it was mentioned, but from each one he took something for his own portrait. He was able to take advantage of names also, as where Leonardo paints the portraits of the Duke of Milan's mistresses, Lucretia Crivelli and Cecilia

Galerani, the poetess, Ludovico himself, and the Duchess Beatrice. Phrases like 'the refinement of the dead,' and 'faint always with some inexplicable faintness,' and 'strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions,' are less appropriate to the things or persons described than to Pater himself, or illuminate them less. Only once does he quite plainly announce his own taste: where he calls the head of a young man at Florence, which he thinks that of the favourite pupil and servant of Leonardo, one 'which Love chooses for its own.' But equally his own is the Sforza, who was both religious sentimentalist and poisoner. Still more so the picture of the people whom he calls fantastic, changeful and dreamlike, moving in the streets of Milan—their 'life of brilliant sins and exquisite amusements.' He is the spectator still; he sees, not life, but pictures of life, fantastic, changeful, dreamlike. The words, 'brilliant sins and exquisite amusements,' are a kind of sweet essence distilled from what has in it much besides sweetness. The essay is full of such essences. Beauty, mystery, pathos, artificiality, intellectual curiosity, nobility, sin . . . are here in their essences. They combine to make an essay that stood alone in 1869.

If a great deal of its material had not been

discredited by later criticism the essay would have been a model of concentrated exposition. But, in fact, it is on a plane untouched by this criticism. It is as independent of previous special knowledge as a work of fiction. That combination of many elements is Pater's alone. At the same time it asks, if not previous special knowledge, an uncommon measure of initial sympathy for the completion of its spell. It creates nothing absolutely. It calls spirits only half-way up from the vasty deep: the reader must go and peer for them. For not only is Pater commenting on things which his words alone cannot summon to the mind, but he is more or less plainly to be seen at times making efforts towards his desired, if unconscious, effect. Thus the repetition of the word 'strange' is a betrayal, and other words also do not define the objects mentioned so much as the purpose of the writer. At last 'strange' becomes a mere symbol of this purpose, telling us that Pater affects the quality of strangeness. A sensuous richness and languor are present in the essay more impressively than strangeness, because, I suppose, they were a possession instead of an aspiration. The celebrated passage about La Gioconda—'The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters . . .'—suggests what Pater feels before something which is not before

us; nor do we need it. Another art—I think a greater—would have compelled us to feel thus without all these suggestions: would have shown us the thing by its effect, as Homer showed Helen. But in this passage the thing itself is of no importance, except as the accidental origin of the reverie. We are not even sure of the effect of the thing on the writer, though we know that his temperament prefers to interpret it in this manner.

That was perhaps the peculiar sensation which that picture, and nothing else, excited in Pater. It is the chief question, he says—what peculiar sensation is excited in us by an artist's work—which a critic has to answer. His *Sandro Botticelli* is very different from the *Leonardo*. Both are capable of giving intense pleasure to readers ignorant of either painter. Both, although so full of material detail relating to an age and country remote from us, reveal a man of our own time, altogether unlike either Leonardo and Botticelli. Here again, in *Sandro Botticelli*, Pater selects and combines his material into a concentrated or consistent whole. Such a man might have made the notices in The Dictionary of National Biography works of art: he is so brief, orderly, and clear. He could make a work of art by a cento of quotations, and in certain essays might appear to be doing

hardly more. Yet how purely his own is their combination of kindliness, sadness, faintness and strangeness! He would almost wish for a document showing that Botticelli died earlier than is supposed, because thus he would not have to think of the painter's 'dejected old age.' Botticelli's people have 'the wistfulness of exiles'; they are saddened by the shadow of 'the great things from which they shrink.' His Madonnas are 'peevish-looking' because of the 'intolerable humour' that took them away from their true children in a rude home—gypsy children in Apennine villages, who are choir boys on Sundays, 'their thick black hair nicely combed, and fair white linen on their sunburnt throats.' He sees a white light, a strange whiteness as from snow, cast up hard and cheerless on the sad faces. Venus is sad—'you might think'—because of 'the whole long day of love yet to come'; her flesh is grey, her flowers are wan. He sees a look of self-hatred in the Justice, so that her sword seems that of suicide. These feelings are unmodified throughout the essay: only the baby centaurs, the 'bright, small creatures of the woodland,' interrupt them for a moment and deepen them. The artist of whom he gives this impression belongs to a middle world, where men 'take no sides in great conflicts,' thus making for himself the limits

'within which art, undisturbed by any moral ambition, does its most sincere and surest work.'

Michelangelo is another occasion for an opulent narrative and a revelation of Pater. It is a portrait of the artist as well as the sitter. He begins by demanding 'strangeness' from all works of art. The peaks of Carrara are strange; so is the quarrying. The interfusion of sweetness and strength which he finds characteristic of Michelangelo is 'strange.' . . . The incidents for displaying Michelangelo are excellently chosen and managed. Even in some of them Pater intervenes, as where he refers to the painter's birth 'in an interval of a rapid midnight journey in March.' Still more does he intervene in saying that he 'had not been always, we may think, a mere Platonic lover.' 'We may think' is a phrase that will occur again. 'Vague and wayward' he calls the 'loves' of Michelangelo. Vittoria Colonna, his mistress, is 'a woman already weary': the two enjoy 'the sunless pleasures of weary people, whose care for external things is slackening.' In his last years he is a 'ghost,' with 'faint sensibilities,' 'dreaming' of primitive things. Pater thinks the sacristy of San Lorenzo, with Michelangelo's memorials of the Medici, a place of 'vague and wistful' speculation; so Dante's Beatrice has the 'wistful, ambiguous' vision of

a child. These recurring words seem unquestionably to reveal Pater's own predilections of emotion or taste. Thus twice in the essay he couples 'youthful' with 'princely.' He felt something of the heathen pity and awe at 'the stiff limbs and colourless lips' of death; he regarded death as 'dignifying' and spoke of 'death in its distinction'; the 'wasting and etherealisation' of death were pathetically suggested to him by sculpture in low relief. There is no doubt of his delighted awe at the picture of La Bella Simonetta dying young and borne to the grave with face uncovered, or the fair young Cardinal's effigy carved with care for 'the shapely hands and feet and sacred attire.' He makes two captive youths by Michelangelo feel their chains 'like scalding water on their proud and delicate flesh.' The 'poor pathetic pleasures' of Westmorland peasants in their 'darkened houses' are characteristic in the same way.

In fact the strong, though unobtrusive, personal element, introduced by Pater into these essays, puts to his credit the rare quality, *intimité*, or expression, which alone, he believed, could make imaginative work 'really worth having.' The same elements, as has been shown, occur again and again. In 'Pico della Mirandola,' for example, are to be met the weariness and the 'loves'—that young philosopher had 'loved

much and been beloved by women'—the idea of early death, the use of 'strange': in *Joachim du Bellay*, daintiness, *finesse*, delicacy, nicety, elegance, grace, refinement, strangeness, early death, with phrases like 'a strange delightful foreign aspect,' 'a weird foreign grace,' 'exquisite faintness,' 'princes weary of love,' 'subdued and delicate excitement': in *Two Early French Stories*, 'the sweet grave figure' of Aucassin going to battle in 'dainty tight-laced armour': in the essay on Coleridge, 'consumptive refinements,' 'dreamy grace,' 'rich delicate dreaminess.'

Only very rarely does Pater commit himself to a clear opinion such as that Rabelais is in need of softening and castigation. The essays are his own because they make a conscious and unconscious revelation of his taste and spirit. In almost every one he defines, but with some variations, the aim of his study. He is speaking of himself when he calls the Renaissance a movement inspired by a desire for 'a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life,' a search for new means of intellectual and imaginative enjoyment, 'new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art.' It is his own as well as Pico's belief, that 'nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality.' This belief for him is the essence of humanism: he repeats it with a

difference by saying that 'whatever is done as it could never be done by another has its true value and interest.' He is always on the look-out for just that which can be found only in one place, 'the peculiar quality of pleasure,' which one man's work can excite in us; for the sign of a man's 'most inward and peculiar' moods, his 'special sense.'

He was accused by Mrs. Mark Pattison, reviewing *The Renaissance* in the Westminster Review, of missing 'the connection between art and literature and other forms of life of which they are the outward expression'; and he would have been condemned, if his aim had been anything but an expression of his personal pleasure in this or that flower of the Renaissance, plucked simply because he liked it. He was interested in the strangeness of effects, not of causes and processes.

He saw artists, lordly patrons, beautiful models, pictures that men would gladly keep for ever, jewellery, landscape, verses, tombs, fictitious heroes, religious and philosophical ideas, curiosity as to 'the vague land' beyond death, all as splendid figures in the pageant marching by him, in nineteenth-century Oxford, out of the past. He was a man of no great passion, no great wealth or activity. He read books, visited old churches and picture galleries, and

talked with Fellows of Colleges. This book was the cream of his life between twenty-five and thirty-five. It had all 'happened in the heart.' Throughout the volume he has always a book or a picture beside him. He is gazing out, through a little oriel window, on a world that cannot enter into his quiet study. He will look only at what is choicest, at the beautiful, the princely, the mighty, the rare. He will see only the fifth act, or perhaps the third. The lighting is perfect. The concentration is wondrous. Everyone, saint and sinner, is at his best 'for the elevation and adornment of our spirits.' They are all grouped, without inessentials, as on the stage. Pater is pleased with the 'strangely twisted' staircases of the Loire district because they would enable 'the actors in a theatrical mode of life' to pass one another unseen. When he has not a picture before him, he seems to have, as when he writes of 'the pleasures of the frosty season, about the vast emblazoned chimneys of the time, and with a *bonhomie* as of little children, or old people': the wood on those hearths will not crackle or hiss or explode. He must have things the very best of their kind: Giorgione the painter is for him—as perhaps Pater is for those who never saw him or his portrait—'presumably gracious,' as well as felicitously 'early dead.' He is like

those who are weary of the present and yearn for 'the spectacle of beauty and strength.' His landscape is like that of the Venetians, retaining only 'certain abstracted elements' of line or colour—'a country of the pure reason or half-imaginative memory'—the spirit or essence of landscape. The life he watches must be 'a singularly rich and high-strung sort of life.' The dresses must be either rich or chaste—he loves 'spotless white linen' at wrist or throat.

In the latest essay of *The Renaissance*, that on the school of Giorgione, which was added to the second edition, Pater is bent as much as ever on the exquisite moment. He represents in a few words many exquisite moments from paintings, from the 'feverish, tumultuously coloured' Venice, of Giorgione's day—'exquisite pauses in time, in which, arrested thus, we seem to be spectators of all the fulness of existence, and which are like some consummate extract or quintessence of life.' It is not surprising that one thus in search of the exquisite, of what has been cleansed of the impurity, irrelevancy and repetition of ordinary life, should arrive at the opinion that music is the typical art, and that all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music, because in music it is impossible to distinguish matter from form. He goes on to the transformation

of matter in actual life, as, for example, when a scene momentarily has 'artistic qualities' and is like a picture; and still further to the artistic qualities of furniture, dress, and the intercourse of human life, when they are handled so as to have a worth in themselves; they have, he says, a mysterious grace and attractiveness 'for the wise.' This also is not surprising in one who understood so early the subtlety and complexity of life, where every hour is unique, 'changed altogether by a stray word, or glance, or touch,' who denied formulas 'less living and flexible than life itself,' and saw poetry cultivating in us those 'finer appreciations' on which true justice in this subtle and complex world depends.

What is more surprising is a passage where he speaks of 'the unexpected blessedness' of moments in life, when our everyday consciousness is relaxed and we are more receptive of the 'happier powers' in things without us. This receptivity is for most people not to be cultivated or counted on. To admit the importance of it is to cast suspicion on Pater's conscious quest of sensation, to make absurd his advice to be sure that your passion is passion, and that it pays for itself by 'this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness.' These fortunate evasive moods of receptivity may be discovered to yield the fruit, but they have little

to do with the art which comes to us proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to the moments of life, 'simply for those moments' sake'; to the artists themselves the moods may be priceless, to the æsthetic spectator with a stop-watch they should seem either wasteful or barbarous. It may be significant that they should first be mentioned or suggested in an essay written ten years after the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*. Yet an essay on Romanticism, of almost the same date, couples with artists 'those who have treated life in the spirit of art.' It may be said of *The Renaissance* that it suggests a writer who treats life in the spirit of art. The same phrase occurs in his *Diaphaneité* and his *Wordsworth*. That the end of life is contemplation, not action, being, not doing, is, he says, 'the principle of all higher morality.' He connects poetry and art with this principle because they 'by their very sterility are a type of beholding for the joy of beholding.' Thus he thinks they encourage the treatment of life 'in the spirit of art'; and to identify the means and the ends of life is to do this. He calls it 'impassioned contemplation,' and poets the experts in it, withdrawing our thoughts from 'the mere machinery of life' to the spectacle of men and nature in their grandeur. To witness this spectacle with

appropriate emotions, he says, 'is the aim of all culture.'

It is impossible not to regard this aim, as Pater expressed it, as a kind of higher philately or connoisseurship. He speaks like a collector of the great and beautiful. He collected them from books, and pictures, not from life. He is on the look out for them; he knows them by certain signs; on his pages they appear only at his desire, never taking us by surprise as they do in Nature and in poetry. Thus he tends to conventionalise the strange, to turn all things great and small into a coldly pathetic strain of music. He refines upon the artists who have refined upon the Lord of Lords. Shakespeare's Claudio is a 'flowerlike young man' set in 'the horrible blackness' of a prison; Isabella is 'clear, detached, columnar,' or, with the Duke as friar, 'like some grey monastic picture.' He is very glad of those who do not make 'impassioned contemplation' their end. For they are the chief contrivers of the spectacles which he is looking on at, with appropriate emotions; and but for them, contemplation could hardly be of 'supreme importance' in the conduct of life, since all would be contemplative, and there would be little to contemplate, save the artist Death, 'blanching the features of youth and spoiling its goodly hair.'

VI

STYLE

It is not known what the Old Mortality society thought of *Diaphaneité* when they heard it in 1864. I can only say that I think I know what Pater meant by it. Not being certain of his meaning it is with diffidence that I say anything about his method of expressing it. There can be no doubt that he had taken great pains with the expression; no doubt at all that he did not write as he spoke. The interjected 'Well' near the end is the one obvious tinge of speech; there is perhaps another in the lack of connecting links which intonation supplies. The attempt at exactness has achieved a notable colourlessness. The language is colourless, and from beginning to end each word has a mere dictionary value, and not one conferred by the context and the writer's personality. The essay has no gesture, no advancing motion, and is painful to read aloud. In spite of a kind of hard lucidity it is not anywhere easily intelligible.

It needs a glossary and several treatises for footnotes. 'The fine edge of light, where the elements of our moral nature refine themselves to the burning point' is perhaps an exact but certainly an isolated, unsocial phrase. I can make almost nothing of the next sentence but one: 'The world has no sense fine enough for these evanescent shades, which fill up the blanks between contrasted types of character—delicate provision in the organisation of the moral world for the transmission to every part of it of the life quickened at single points!' To what does the second half refer? and why the note of exclamation, except that Pater was fresh from Carlyle?

He never published this essay, but if he had done so he would probably have rewritten it and made it independent of the intonation and gesture by which, on reading it to the Old Mortality, he may have made it intelligible. As it stands it is clearly an effort. The writer seems to be striving to express a thought from which he has detached himself; he is shaping it to an end which apparently he has not reached. Ordinary mortal speech, meaning so much more than it says, is better than this inhuman and yet imperfect refinement. But something it does express which it was not designed to, though perhaps it would not be de-

tected by one ignorant of the later writings. Pater speaks of the world as dimly conscious of some 'great sickness and weariness of heart,' and I think the phrase one which points to some, if not great, sickness and weariness in the writer. He is keenly aware of the risks of a 'colourless uninteresting existence.' Then, again, in that 'kind of impotence,' the 'ineffectual wholeness of nature' of his ideal character, which he calls a 'moral sexlessness' and compares with the 'sexless beauty' of Greek statues, Pater is expressing some preference or instinct of his own which is not easily definable. He is on the edge of a plain revelation when he says that 'often' the presence of this ideal nature 'is felt like a sweet aroma in early manhood,' and that afterwards the savour faints away under the influence of the world's 'adulterated atmosphere.' He tells us nothing more. Others have told us that the ideal was suggested by a friend. Pater was twenty-five at the time, and a small audience of Oxford acquaintances would not encourage intimacy. He was not one to make the most of his experience; if he had been, he would have prolonged the sentence about that sweet aroma of the ideal nature into something like Maeterlinck's essay on the pre-destined in Le Trésor des Humbles, where we are told that the author

has known 'many whom the same death was leading by the hand,' how 'at school we were vaguely conscious of them,' how they were to be seen together 'in remote corners of the garden, under the trees,' grave but smiling mysteriously. . . . Whether or not Pater had found it embodied in a friend, the character represented an aspiration towards something very remote from himself—the 'intellectual guilelessness, or integrity' which has 'the range and seriousness of culture without its strain and over-consciousness,' and has 'nearly always . . . a corresponding outward semblance.' Never again was he to use this dark intimate solemnity, though the same type of character was to recur with hardly more perfect definition, and he was to show a continuous interest in the mystic Blake.

Another vaguely revealing sentence is that where he speaks of one who is 'ever looking for the breaking of a light he knows not whence about him,' noting 'with a strange heedfulness the faintest paleness in the sky.' The 'strange' is characteristic: so too is the breaking light.

But more than these things the first hearer or reader of *Diaphaneité* would notice Pater's unusual handling of language. Contemporary gossip credited him with a 'wonderful style.' It was obviously a style which aimed consciously

at accuracy and a kind of perfection; unconsciously, perhaps, at a hard purity and dignity. It abhorred paraphrase, anything like padding even for the purpose of connection, all looseness, repetition, emphasis and personal accent. It had not attained to being a 'wonderful style' except by causing wonder. It was obscure and almost without grace. It was wonderful particularly in its detachment. For it retained no sign of an original impulse in it. If there had been a strong impulse the after elaboration had worn it completely away. This detachment made language seem to be as hard and inhuman a material as marble, and like marble to have had no original connection with the artist's idea. It was shy but decided, as well as stiff. It suggested the desire of a narrow, intense perfection both in language and in life.

The essay on Coleridge of a year later is less noticeable in style because less obscure. Such obscurity as there is, or rather uncertainty, is due to the lack of continuity; for here again detachment and elaboration have checked the flow which the original impulse might have given to the thought. Thus in the last sentence but two, and the last but one of the first paragraph, it is not by any means clear at once what 'they' and 'such' refer to. The writing is still stiff, progressing with many pauses and much diffi-

culty. It is unlike speech and unlike oratory. It is aiming at a naked perfection, disencumbered of all clothes, colour, and even flesh. The reader has to pause again and again to ask what it is that communicates 'the charm of what is chastened, high-strung, athletic,' and why those three adjectives are used; to make sure that he has put the right accents on the sentence:—

His 'spirits,' at once more delicate, and so much more real, than any ghost—the burden, as they were the privilege, of his *temperament*—like it, were an integral element in his everyday life.

It is an uncomfortable, reticent style. Sentences like the following are shorn of all human quality except *naïveté* and pedantry:—

Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, from the story of the stealing of Dionysus downwards, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvellous inventions.

'May very well happen' is *naïve*: 'in all ages' must be the inadvertence of pedantry. Did he expect his readers to be ready with instances from all ages? If not, the value of 'a certain dreamy grace' is doubtful.

It might be suspected that a mere dread of vulgarity and commonplace had forced this shy and rigid spirit into such isolation. Speaking of Coleridge's Aids to Reflection, The Friend, and Biographia Literaria, he calls them 'bundles of notes,' the 'mere preparation for an artistic effect which the finished literary artist would be careful one day to destroy,' 'efforts to propagate the volatile spirit of conversation into the less ethereal fabric of a written book.' That kind of weakness was impossible to Pater: fear of it carried him to an opposite weakness that might prove as dangerous. He avoided obscurity more and more, by dealing chiefly with the concrete and with the ideas and images of other men. The stiffness, the lack of an emotional rhythm in separate phrases, and of progress in the whole, the repellent preoccupation with an impersonal and abstract kind of perfection, did not disappear. The rarity of blank verse in his prose is the chief mark of its unnaturalness. When his prose sounds well it is with a pure sonority of words that is seldom related to the sense. He expresses himself not by sounds, but by images, ideas, and colours.

I have noticed already how he came to repeat words expressing what was pleasant or in some way fascinating. 'Strange' begins in *Diaphaneité*. Words expressing refinement followed

in large numbers, so that one page contains '*finesse*,' 'nicety' twice, 'daintiness,' 'light aerial delicacy,' 'simple elegance,' 'gracious,' 'graceful and refined,' and 'fair, priestly'; they continually remind us of the author's delight in delicacy, elegance, etc., and his always obviously conscious use of language does the same. When he has to say that Leonardo was illegitimate, he uses eight words: 'The dishonour of illegitimacy hangs over his birth.' He at once makes the 'dishonour' a distinction with some grandeur: he almost makes it a visible ornament. Whenever he can, he seeks the visible, insisting, for example, that Pico della Mirandola was buried 'in the hood and white frock of the Dominican order.' Even his ideas appeal as much as possible to the eye. Thus, in *Winckelmann*, alluding to the growth and modification of religions, he says that they 'brighten under a bright sky' and 'grow intense and shrill in the clefts of human life, where the spirit is narrow and confined, and the stars are visible at noonday.' His very words are to be seen, not read aloud; for if read aloud they betray their artificiality by a lack of natural expressive rhythm. His closely packed sentences, pausing again and again to take up a fresh burden of parenthesis, could not possibly have a natural rhythm. For example, he is writing of Leonardo:—

In him first appears the taste for what is *bizarre* or *recherché* in landscape: hollow places full of the green shadow of bituminous rocks, ridged reefs of trap-rock which cut the water into quaint sheets of light—their exact antitype is in our own western seas; all the solemn effects of moving water.

Here the words 'their exact antitype is in our own western seas' are an interruption—and a useless one—which might almost have come out of a note-book: the presence of this interrupting phrase, and the absence of one that might have elucidated 'the dreamy grace' of those marvellous sea inventions in all ages, are purely accidental, and this style condemns accidents.

Some of his sentences, complicated and not merely long, suggest an ideal essay that should consist of one perfect sentence. Pater could have arranged any biography in Who's Who in one sentence. But it would not be worth while. Some of these long sentences are admirable, some difficult; some make a footnote unnecessary. In nearly all the length seems to be arbitrary, or dictated by the need of variety in the paragraph. Neither in long nor in short sentences has he any fear of misinterpretation. He will say, for example, in *Pico della Mirandola*:—

It was after many wanderings . . . that Pico came to rest in Florence. Born in 1463, he was then twenty years old.

Which at first seems to say that Pico was already twenty on entering this world. His way of pausing to qualify, or to corroborate, sometimes leads him actually to slip, as, in *The School of Giorgione*, when he says :—

> It is noticeable that . . . each art may be observed to pass . . .

He allows himself a few colloquial forms by way simply of variety, now and then an exclamatory phrase, now and then a phrase that is attached as if it were an after-thought, as here :—

> He is initiated into those differences of personal type, manner, and even of dress, which are best understood there —that 'distinction' of the *Concert* of the *Pitti* Palace.

Such devices—for they are used too often to be accidents—do not give any ease to the writing. The style remains foreign to one who has known and loved it these fifteen years.

Nearly every one of the essays in *The Renaissance* opens abruptly. Pater cannot wind into our confidence. He is a shy man, full of 'it may be' and 'we may think,' and he has the awkward abruptness of a shy man. But this sudden entry is due also to his disdain of mere connections and of any words that are under weight. He will have nothing 'common or mean.' If he has to mention the pleasure of a cold plunge in summer, he speaks

of 'the moment of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat.' 'The flood of water' is very foreign. His sentences must not only be essential and perfectly fitting parts of a whole, but they must be somehow exquisite of themselves, certainly in form, if possible in content.

As he says that not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end of life, so he would wish to have every sentence, every clause, every word, conspicuously worthy, apart from the sum and effect of all. Here is still another reason for doing without connections, props, padding, and whatever is of itself unimportant. No writer can be skipped less easily. The lack of progressive movement, the lack of a clear and strong emotional tone such as makes for movement, forbids us to take for granted more than a sentence now and then at long intervals. Every inch has the qualities of the whole. Open any essay at any page: it will yield some beautiful object or strange thought presented in the words of a learned and ceremonious lover. He says of the school of Giorgione that the air in their painting 'seems as vivid as the people who breathe it, and literally empyrean, all impurities being burnt out of it. . .'; and in another place speaks of 'a singular charm of liquid air, with which the whole picture seems instinct.' Such

an air, though not as vivid, is the atmosphere of Pater's work. It is far from producing the 'wind-searched brightness and energy' of which Pater goes on to speak: it is rather a chilly unchanging light as of a northward gallery. It has not ease or warmth or music, but dignity, ceremony, educated grace. Above all, it is choice. Pater is at all points an eclectic. Several times he insists upon the necessity of separating what is touched with 'intense and individual power' in a man's work from what has 'almost no character at all.' In art, in life, the best of whatever kind will delight him. He loves the spectacle of 'brilliant sins and exquisite amusements.' The strong, the magnificent, the saintly, the beautiful, the cruel, the versatile, the intense, the gay, the brilliant, the weary, the sad-coloured, everything but the dull, delights him. From religion, philosophy, poetry, art, Nature, human life, he summons what is rich and strange. He delivers it in choicest language because it has to be worthy of his own choicest moments of enjoyment. For here also he is an eclectic, ignoring the ordinary, the dull, the trite.

Thus his prose embalms choice things, as seen at choice moments, in choice words. I have said that it does without accidents and suffers by the few that have been admitted. How far

he escaped dulness in real life at Oxford, in Kensington, or on the Continent, we do not certainly know, though we do know that his French travels tired him, that he had an air of fatigue, that his writing often is languid. But in *The Renaissance* all save the best is hidden away. We do not see the grey working day, the cap and gown, the note-books, the feet burning from the pavements of picture galleries, but things 'that set the spirit free for a moment,' 'stirring of the senses,' 'strange dyes,' 'strange colours and curious odours,' 'work of the artist's hands,' 'passionate attitudes.' It is not the style of ecstasy such as can be seen in Jefferies' Story of My Heart, or Sterne's Journal to Eliza, or Keats' last letter to Fanny Brawne. Hardly does it appear to be the style of remembered ecstasy as in Traherne's Centuries of Meditation or Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey. It is free from traces of experience. All is subtilised, intellectualised, 'casting off all debris.' It is a polished cabinet of collections from history, nature, and art; objects detached from their settings but almost never without being integrated afresh by Pater's careful arrangement, whether they are pictures, books, landscapes or personalities. It fulfils Pater's own condition of art by putting its own 'happy world' in place of 'the meaner world of our common days.'

VII

GREEK STUDIES

PATER 'treats life in the spirit of art.' In his essay on Winckelmann he speaks of the renunciations of this or that outworn or conventional or imperfect interest, 'if we mean to mould our lives to artistic perfection.' Here he has in mind Goethe and all those who aim at 'the life of culture.' Such men, he says, with their 'supreme artistic view of life,' and 'the completeness and serenity of a watchful, exigent intellectualism,' make many renunciations, rejoicing to be 'away from and past their former selves.' And this 'completeness and serenity' Pater calls Goethe's Hellenism. Everywhere in *The Renaissance* Pater is to be found thinking of Greece, even apart from its influence on the life of that period, and he introduces the eighteenth-century Winckelmann chiefly on account of his Hellenism, and his sympathy with the humanists of the Renaissance. Greek culture fascinated him. He was well aware that he saw it detached from all that had once

been 'slight and vulgar' and bound up with it, that he knew it only in the 'reflected and refined light' of scholarship. Yet he asked whether that ideal of 'breadth,' 'centrality,' 'blitheness,' 'repose,' could not be brought down into 'the gaudy perplexed light' of modern life. It is doubtful whether he could fairly compare the two modes of life, seeing Hellenism in books, and both Hellenism and modern civilised life from an Oxford study. He saw the Greeks like so many statues. When he speaks of Plato's Lysis, for example, we do not think of Socrates swearing 'By the dog of Egypt! I should greatly prefer a real friend to all the gold of Darius, or even to Darius himself: I am such a lover of friends as that'; we do not see the boys playing at odd and even in a corner of the Apodyterium after the sacrifice, or Ctesippus making game of the blushing Hippothales to Socrates:—

'Indeed, Socrates, he has literally deafened us, and stopped our ears with the praises of Lysis; and if he is a little intoxicated, there is every likelihood that we may have our sleep murdered with a cry of Lysis. His performances in prose are bad enough, but nothing at all in comparison with his verse; and when he drenches us with his poems and other compositions, that is really too bad; and what is even worse, is his manner of singing them to his love; this he does in a voice which is truly appalling, and we cannot help hearing him; and now he has a question put to him by you and lo! he is blushing.'

No: Pater sees, and makes us see, nude statues—'that group of brilliant youths in the Lysis, still uninfected by any spiritual sickness, finding the end of all endeavour in the aspects of the human form, the continual stir and motion of a comely human life.' He saw these youths as statues; he did not humanise them by comparisons from an Oxford quadrangle or playing-field; and if he had compared them he would probably have petrified the modern Lysis or Ctesippus instead of giving life to the ancient. He envied this blitheness and serenity, this 'stir and motion of comely human life.' The longer we contemplate it, he says, the more we are inclined to regret its passing away. He tries himself not to regret that perfect world of the playing-field, the temple and the artist's workshop—perfect 'if the Gods could have seemed for ever only fleet and fair and white and red!' Yet at the same moment he acknowledges, not the other perfection of a darker, more complicated life, but the joy of a later age in finding that Greek ideal 'still red with life in the grave,' that is to say, at the Renaissance. He did persuade himself that the shadows were too long for that ideal; the problem of culture could not be solved by perfection of bodily forms, as when the beautiful Phryne ascended naked out of the water before

assembled Greece. But he looked for a new type of culture, that should be equal to the more difficult terms of life, in the heroes of romances, because they stood up grandly against the background of fate or nature, in 'noble attitudes.' They also were as statues. He thrilled as he saw them and asked: 'Who, if he saw through all, would fret against the chain of circumstance which endows one at the end with these great experiences?' Whether the experiences are those of the reader, or the 'noble men and women' of the tragedy, is not quite clear.

When he compares the Greek and the Christian world he cannot help showing a timid sidelong preference. As to serenity, he says, the Greek has the advantage in art because his religion was indifferent to his sensuousness which therefore was altogether without a sense of corruption or shame; Christian asceticism on the other hand discredits 'the slightest touch of sense.' To set Christian *asceticism* against Greek sensuousness is to make a not altogether fair contrast, but it shows Pater's leaning, especially when he goes on to speak of the intoxication of 'genuine artistic interests' due to the sense of antagonism to the spiritual world: 'It has sometimes seemed hard,' he says, to live 'the artistic life' 'without a kind of disavowal to the spiritual world.' It is in

the words 'it has sometimes seemed hard' that I seem to detect Pater's inclination. It appears more strongly as he voices the feeling of freedom when the Greek world was disinterred at the Renaissance. 'Here surely'—he imagines men saying—'is the more liberal mode of life we have been seeking so long, so near us all the while. How mistaken and roundabout have been our efforts to reach it by monastic reverie; how they have deflowered the flesh; how little have they really emancipated us!' With something very much like enthusiasm he pictures Winckelmann finding Greek art, escaping from abstract theories to the exercise of sight and touch. Yet again his preference appears when he compares the art of the Middle Ages, trying to express mystical thoughts, with the Greek art expressing thoughts which were always in the happiest readiness to be transformed into objects of the senses; he chooses a picture by Fra Angelico and pronounces that it does not transform into objects of the senses, the highest thoughts about man and the world. He was afterwards to say that a picture by Botticelli, of Venus rising from the sea, gave 'a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves even of the finest period'; but that was a singular extravagance.

He was enamoured of the 'lordliness and

distinction' of life in Athens, or Corinth, or Lacedæmon, so that he seems almost capable of Pico della Mirandola's attempt, which so attracted him, to reconcile the Greek Gods with Christianity. In the earliest of his Greek Studies, *Demeter and Persephone* (1875), he recognises a power of elevation and purification for the modern mind in Greek religion. He reminds us of parallels with Christianity, Demeter being Our Lady of Sorrows, the Eleusinian festival a sort of All Souls' Day; and one of his chief objects is to reveal the Romantic spirit in the Greek mind, and the worship of sorrow in Greek religion. The study shows how far Pater himself was from the 'mere cheerfulness,' attributed to Greek religion, from the 'blitheness and repose' of Hellenism. For his own character pervades it as it does *The Renaissance*. The accent of the celebrated passage on La Gioconda is heard again when he speaks of Persephone: 'She is compact of sleep and death and flowers, but of narcotic flowers especially, a *revenant*, who in the garden of Aidoneus has eaten of the pomegranate, and bears always the secret of decay in her, of return to the grave, in the mystery of the swallowed seeds;' and in 'her shadowy eyes have gazed upon the fainter colouring of the underworld, and the tranquillity, born of it,

has "passed into her face."' He could not have chosen a subject, or a method, less likely to produce the kind of Greek form and atmosphere suggested by his essay on Winckelmann; for he had to meet a popular phase of religion untouched by the refining and humanising influence of art.

In his next Greek study he dwelt on the gloomy as well as the graceful side of Dionysus, and on his 'message for a certain number of refined minds,' as a type of second birth, suggesting something—'as yet unrealised'—like the resurrection of Nature. He is careful also to admit the struggle in Greek art between the severity and limitation of sculpture and the multitude and variety of human thoughts, even Greek thoughts; he does not fail to tell us in *The Bacchanals of Euripides* (1878) that a fragment from the Bacchae of Euripides, the lament of Agave for her son Dionysus, was incorporated in an early Christian poem, the Christus Patiens of Gregory Nanzianzen; and in fact he enriches the figure of a Greek God by researches in widely different phases of Greek art and poetry, and also in later speculation and in states of mind apparently common to the modern and the ancient.

When these essays were written Pater could command a place for them in the best maga-

zines; all his work was printed there as a matter of course before reaching the form of books. The two essays on the Myth of Demeter and Persephone were delivered as lectures and printed in a review a year later. The consideration of an actual audience was not without effect on Pater; the opening sentences are less abrupt, and connecting links and explanations are more numerous. He was conscious that his task was to inform and teach those who were approaching the deeper study of Greek thought; he was to 'increase their stock of poetical impressions.' Probably his lectures were too concise, and too little under the control of one clear purpose to be successful as lectures, but they are excellent examples of his power of combining a multitude of choice details from a hundred places, and of arranging them harmoniously yet without an intrusive prejudice. As a rule men exercise this power at the expense of accuracy. Pater uses it to give form to his material, not to make converts to an opinion. No man of aggressive personality would have given so much of his time to long translations from an Homeric hymn, Theocritus, Ovid and Claudian. Translation cannot be better done than it was by Pater, unless it is a fresh creation. In this work his patience and sense of decency in language were entirely in place. He strove without prejudice

to give a clear and unadulterated version of what in the original was beyond any doubt. He made no pretence of reproducing doubtful atmosphere; for he could feel instinctively what senseless jargon would be produced by such labours. He had the aims of an ordinary crib-writer, but he was faithful to them and to his own ideal of English, and he knew not haste. Of course the result is no impersonal perfection. The style has that hard and stationary refinement which was the result of Pater's temper and of his too wholly conscious aims at a negative perfection; and it is more suited to the late work of Claudian and Ovid than to the Homeric hymn-writers. The life has gone out of the poetry, but the corpse is washed and embalmed most decorously, so that the form and features and permanent characteristics may be observed almost as in the original. It is remarkable that the Homeric hymn and the passage from Ovid might here and there be mistaken for Pater. Evidently he could do nothing common nor mean though he undertook the humblest tasks. The faults are such as can hardly be avoided in working inch by inch with no central and continuous impulse: he could not realise the visual confusion of the words 'Thereupon the earth opened, and the King of the great nation of the dead sprang out with his immortal

horses.' Here, unless he is indifferent either to the story or to the exact words, the reader will at first, if only partially and momentarily and half-unconsciously, think of Dis as springing out among his horses, or as carrying them in his arms; he must think—and of course he can do so almost instantaneously—what really happened, and then admit that the words bear this meaning but do not command it.

The translation is not merely transliteration, nor is the arrangement of the classical and modern material in these four essays lacking in personality. *The Study of Dionysus* and *The Bacchanals of Euripides*, though not lectures, are somewhat more consciously instructive and aim at a more academic completeness than the essays in *The Renaissance*, while at the same time the matter is less familiar and less to Pater's taste. He has so chosen and managed this matter that perhaps no other classical essays are equally rich in substance and pleasant in form. There is much work of deeper scholarship, much of more exuberant imagination, like Ruskin's Queen of the Air, but nothing so Greek that is at the same time a piece of English art. It is always clear where he is fanciful, as when he quotes Wordsworth's 'Beauty born of murmuring sound shall pass into her face,' and then asks us to think of Dionysus as an image

into which the beauty born of the vine has passed. It is always clear what his own feeling is. No one else—at least before 1875—would have written about 'the delicate, fresh, farm-lad we may still actually see sometimes, like a graceful field flower among the corn'; or about 'the purged and dainty intelligence of the human countenance,' or the 'crisp, chaste opening of the lips . . . and the delicately touched ears of corn,' in a profile of Demeter on a coin. His peculiar sense of purity is conspicuous again and again, as where he comes to the second birth of Dionysus, whom he calls the 'spiritual form' of fire and dew. He asks us to think of the poetry of water in the hot South:—

> Think of the darkness of the well in the breathless court, with the delicate ring of ferns kept alive just within the opening; of the sound of the fresh water flowing through the wooden pipes into the houses of Venice, on summer mornings; of the cry *Acqua fresca!* at Padua or Verona, when the people run to buy what they prize, in its rare purity, more than wine, bringing pleasures so full of exquisite appeal to the imagination, that, in these streets, the very beggars, one thinks, might exhaust all the philosophy of the epicurean.

Opposed to this sense of purity, but united with it in Pater's æstheticism, is his sense of the delicate, drowsy, poisonous, sinister, languid, luxuriant, in nature, leading him to discover

'the thinly disguised unhealthfulness' of the habitations and heavy perfumes of spring flowers. So, too, the figure of Bacchus—'the long tunic down to the white feet, somewhat womanly'—is adorned after Pater's own heart, with the gold flowers and incense of the East, the mitre on his perfumed yellow hair. He quaintly and modestly insinuates himself into the company of the Bacchanals going out to the mountains; men wander out of the town to enjoy the first heats of spring, saying, 'Let us go out into the fields,' and, as he tells us, 'a strange madness seems to lurk among the flowers, ready to lay hold on us also.' Quaint also is his remark, before depicting Demeter as presiding over the life of the farm, that in farm life everywhere there is much that 'gives to persons of any seriousness of disposition special opportunity for grave and gentle thoughts.' He illustrates this remark by references, not to Enfield, Hadlow, Canterbury, Oxford, or Tuscany, but to Wordsworth's and Millet's peasants. And all the time he was fully conscious that scientific criticism looked sternly and, as he thought, cynically on 'our catching any resemblance in the earlier world to the thoughts that really occupy our own minds.' He had no masterful impulse to set such criticism and his consciousness of it at defiance. Yet, as has been observed, his nature

shyly asserted itself. It gives the pathetic tone, diversified by an interest in the sensual and in the dainty and delicate, which prevails in these studies. It will not be denied, for example, the expression of its feeling that the satyrs, standing half-way between man and beast, are 'speculating wistfully on their being,' and that animals also 'seem' to have this wistful expression in the presence of man. He shows his delight in children once more in describing the pucknosed little Pans who accompany Ceres in an Italian engraving. He was extremely fond of wistfulness, as of weariness, languor, indifference, painful brooding; and he knew it, and therefore doubted whether his impressions of melancholy, weariness, languor, indifference, and painful brooding, were true to the intention of the artist from whom he gained them. He was a detached spectator. He supposed that the mind of the man who struck that beautiful coin with the head of Demeter was 'unclouded by impure or gloomy shadows': he liked to see fresh water sold in the Italian summer and fancied that the very beggars who spent twelve months of the year in these places 'might exhaust all the philosophy of the epicurean.'

The style, even of the essays based on lectures, has all the characteristics of the style in *The Renaissance*, long pausing sentences, phrases

that must have taxed the wind of the lecturer, favourite words like 'dainty,' favourite phrases like 'one might fancy.' In fact, one of the worst sentences ever composed by Pater is to be found in the first lecture on *Demeter and Persephone*:—

> Certainly in extant works of art which represent him (Triptolemus), gems or vase paintings, conform truly enough to this ideal of a 'nimble spirit,' though he wears the broad country hat, which Hermes also wears, going swiftly, half on the airy, mercurial wheels of his farm instrument, harrow or plough—half on wings of serpents—the worm, symbolical of the soil, but winged, as sending up the dust committed to it, after subtle firing, in colours and odours of fruit and flowers.

This is impossible to read aloud; it has no sort of structure even to the eye; afterthoughts cling on it pick-a-back; it is without grace or lucidity. Sometimes in the long-drawn pausing sentences he has to ask the reader's charity to the pronouns, as when he makes Ceres 'step across a country of cut sheaves, pressing it closely to her,' meaning the small Pan higher up on the page; and again to his participles, as when he tells how a ceremony in 'the temple at Delphi, which, as we know, he shares with Apollo, described by Plutarch, represents his mystical resurrection.' His choice of words is less noticeable than in *The Renaissance*. He puts an 'e' into 'aweful' for fear lest we should

not connect it with 'awe.' He uses 'inane' in the strict sense. Again and again we are made aware that the writer accepts no word or arrangement of words as a matter of course, and that if he has an impulse he opposes it with inflexible austerity. For example, he wishes to appeal to those who have touched the earth of a vineyard in August that they may corroborate his suggestion that wine is to the other 'strengths' of the earth as lightning is to light. He writes:—

> And who that has rested a hand on the glittering silex of a vineyard slope in August, where the pale globes of sweetness are lying, does not feel this?

The words 'pale globes of sweetness' remind us that grapes are pale, globular, and sweet; they do not vividly suggest or represent grapes, but rather the mind of a man who has pondered the subject of the relation between things and words, and has come to no inspiring conclusion. What he often succeeds in doing is to refuse to himself, and even to the reader, all the conventional associations of a subject or of a word. Here, for example, in *The Bacchanals of Euripides*, is Dionysus armed with the thyrsus:—

> The pine-cone at its top does but cover a spear point; and the thing is a weapon—the sharp spear of the hunter Zagreus—though hidden now by the fresh leaves, and

that button of pine-cone (useful also to dip in wine, to check the sweetness) which he has plucked down, coming down through the forest, at peace for a while this spring morning.

Nothing here has any value except what Pater gives it. It is an attempt to build up a scene out of sterilised words in a vacuum. All is strange, even to the colloquial tinge of the dubious 'thing' and 'at peace for a while this spring morning,' and the interjected information about the pine-cone. We are forced to regard the words as words, and only in part able to think of the objects denoted by them. In this one sentence the success in refusing conventional associations is a barren one. But as a rule the success is far from barren. It creates a lucid air in which we see refined or curious beings, gods, satyrs, men and women, dresses, a hundred kinds of instruments, tools, utensils, and ornaments. There are many references to action; in fact, *The Bacchanals of Euripides* describes a whole play; but action as a rule is replaced by a series of pictures. Pater's words will not be fitted to actions. We see things as they are on coins, in sculpture, or in a chosen moment of narrative or dramatic poetry. The gods and men and women are 'lordly and distinguished' and rigid: the gesture given to them is beautiful, but it cannot change.

They are like the figures in the 'cold pastoral' on Keats' Grecian urn, 'with marble men and maidens overwrought,' though they are never combined to such perfect effect; theirs is the same silence and 'fair attitude.'

These studies were followed by two others having sculpture definitely as their subject, *The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture* (*The Heroic Age of Greek Art* and *The Age of Graven Images*), and *The Marbles of Ægina* (1880). Here, in considering the Heroic Age of Greek Art, he endeavours to throw back into its proper atmosphere the Greek sculpture which we now see, out of its intended position, and without the concomitant artistic work, away from 'the clear Greek skies, the poetical Greek life.' He shows how Greek sculpture was only the grandest of many crafts that made the necessaries of civilised life, and he complains that isolation from the other crafts, of the weaver, the carpenter, and the goldsmith, have encouraged men to treat the sculpture as if it were almost wholly abstract and intellectualised. He insists that the loftiest sculpture is still sensuous and material, like the pitcher or lamp, addressing the eye before the purely reflective faculty. He has the help of Homer and Hesiod —to a far less extent, of the modern archæologist and excavator—in reconstituting the original

environment of the statues, and illustrating the Asiatic spirit of 'minute and curious loveliness' that accompanied 'the bolder imaginative efforts of Greek art.' At the end, as at the beginning, he insists that the great statue, besides being 'a perfect embodiment of the human ideal, of the reasonable soul and of a spiritual world,' is a 'supremely well-executed object of *vertu*,' like an urn or a cup, meant for the delight of the eyes. He is doing what a man might do if, on hearing someone too solemn-unctuously repeating

> But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
> Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
> Of dragon watch with unenchanted eye, . . .

he should give a brief history of masks, by laureates and others, up to the time when Comus was written for the Earl of Bridgewater, Lord-President of Wales, to be presented at Ludlow Castle on Michaelmas Night, 1634. Sir Sidney Lee has done something of the kind by exposing the craze or plague of sonnets which included Shakespeare's. No doubt Pater has protested too much. He would charm us with a too purely visible picture of 'a people whose civilisation is still young, delighting, as the young do, in ornament, in the sensuous beauty of ivory and gold, in all the lovely productions of skilled fingers.' He charms us quite

frankly as one who thought the palace of Alcinous, in the Odyssey, 'a delightful place to pass time in,' because

> The walls were massy brass; the cornice high
> Blue metals crossed in colours of the sky. . . .

He was always a lover of beautiful houses, and he compared the influence of the earth goddesses to that of 'cool places, quiet houses, subdued light, tranquillising voices.' But although his task is counteracting the tendency to over-emphasise the ideal in Greek art, he does not ignore the mystical early period of religion. In *The Marbles of Ægina* he dwells particularly on that ideal, on the 'intelligent and spiritual element which was essentially Greek, and of which the undraped form of man was an embodiment. Here again, observing in the marbles a sense of 'things bright or sorrowful directly felt,' he compares the sculptor of Ægina to Chaucer.

These essays, like their predecessors, compound archæology, criticism and personal impressions, in a manner rare enough, and to a degree in that manner which is unique. His love of the concrete and visible helps him to present his documents and his arguments at the same time and without sacrificing harmony of tone. Almost any page at random is enough to show how much of Pater's hard stationary

method is due to his delight in clear outlines and solid bodies. He seems to go over all things with a measure. When he describes a statue or a frieze it is as if he were tracing the outlines on paper. Everywhere he shows his natural taste for the physical, material or mechanical, by phrases like 'the sword hot with slaughter, the stifling blood in the throat, the spoiling of the body in every member severally,' or 'youthful, naked, muscular, and with the germ of the Greek profile, but formally smiling.' Sometimes he approaches a sort of connoisseur's technical phrasing, expressive only for other connoisseurs. Yet he does not relax his tenderness, his sense of the pathetic in life, or his love of the languid—as when, for example, he writes of the connexion of love and war, and of the mingling of dalliance with savagery in Ares, and calls the God 'the fair, soft creature suddenly raging like a storm.' He likes the temperance of the Greek, and the gaudiness of the Asiatic, 'the languid Ionian voluptuousness,' almost equally. Temperance, purity, freshness, solemnity, give him a sensuous pleasure, which he transfers to the reader, like water in a golden cup. When he has no visible objects to be described his style retains the character due to handling them, as here, in *The Marbles of Ægina*:—

For as that Ionian influence, the chryselephantine influence, had its patron in Hephæstus, belonged to the religion of Hephæstus, husband of Aphrodite, the representation of exquisite workmanship, of fine art in metal coming from the East in close connexion with the artificial furtherance, through dress and personal ornament, of the beauty of the body; so that Dorian or European influence embodied itself in the religion of Apollo.

Attention to mere physical detail almost seems to be destroying the power to see a thing as one and a whole, and apart from its mechanism and anatomy. Certainly he is most at home in considering a coin or the art of the toilet, for example, in giving a list of precious ornaments. He becomes insensible to the significance, apart from the literal meaning, of some words, and thus he calls a number of golden leaves and flowers that have fallen on the floor of a tomb, 'a downfall of golden leaves and flowers.' Why 'downfall'? It is not absolutely impossible that it was due to negligence, like the sequence of three 'of the's' in the next sentence. A man so attentive to detail must spoil some at least of that detail by failing to relate it to a whole; and by seeing words singly he must miss their effect on readers who see them in company with others and are not content with the 'fancy so many of us have for an exquisite and curious skill in the use of words.'

VIII

MARIUS THE EPICUREAN

In one of his Greek studies, *The Bacchanals of Euripides*, Pater attempted to narrate action, but succeeded rather in making several pictures of scenes in the course of the action; the little actual movement was stiffened by his peculiar use of words. In this same year, 1878, Pater wrote a study of Charles Lamb, and a kind of short story, *The Child in the House*. A more charming essay on Lamb could hardly be written by a completely un-Lamb-like man, one who resembled Lamb only in that he was a bachelor keeping house with his sisters and was curious in words. But Lamb called out of him expressions of common humanity not all of a kind usual to Pater. Like Lamb, Pater had once known Enfield and he recalls—referring to himself as 'the present writer'—hearing the cuckoo for the first time, on a 'brooding early summer's day,' in one of the suburban fields. This must have been in his

earliest childhood, when he lived in the old house at Chase Side. The remembered quiet of that house, or of his aunt's home at Hadlow, seems often to be in his mind, and he is thinking of himself, as much and at least as truly as of Lamb, when he speaks of the value of 'mere physical stillness' for such men, who long for it sometimes, as for no merely negative thing, with a sort of 'mystical sensibility.' I do not know that Lamb ever longed for it; but I feel certain that Pater did. The quiet after storm, the gleam of morning after a night of terror, is not mentioned only once by Pater, and he varies it only a little when he compares the quietness of Lamb's writing after the tragedy of his life, to the relief of one who has escaped shipwreck and 'finds a thing for grateful tears in just sitting quiet at home, under the wall, till the end of days.' Perhaps Lamb's connection with Enfield, or his essay on Blakesmoor House, set Pater on the way which led to *The Child in the House.*

This study is taken from Pater's childhood, and from what he would have wished it to be. A hundred things make it certainly, though confusedly, autobiographical. The tranquillity of the house, the 'exquisite satisfaction in the trimness and well-considered grace of certain things and persons,' the wistfulness and pathos,

the love of ceremonies, are all true at least to the man, as he had already revealed himself. In fact, *The Child in the House* is a not quite satisfactory mixture of a few clear, and many vague childish impressions, with very many more adult reflections in which perhaps little trace remains of childhood. To justify this mixed method he invents Florian Deleal, the man who was once the child in the house, to think of himself in that 'half spiritualised' house of memory: hence the *naïve* betrayal in these words, 'The child of whom I am writing.' At times his method is concrete and detailed, at others he is most airy and abstract; partly because his material was not clear and definite enough, his thoughts floated hither and thither. The style varies from the most careful and precise to the colloquial. Sentences beginning with 'and,' 'so,' 'for,' 'also,' and phrases like 'to make it well' instead of 'to heal it,' show that the unusual intimacy of the task partly disarmed him. The result is a number of small pleasant things like the aged hawthorn's 'plumage of tender, crimson fire out of the heart of the dry wood,' and many gentle emotional impressions of life and death, not so connected as to make the account of this solitary quiet child satisfying as a narrative, or in any other way complete. However much it can please

lovers of the wistful, the delicate, the sensuous, the solitary, seen through a languid air of memory, it can hardly seem to foretell excellence in narrative and psychology. It might certainly be held to proclaim a fiction of any length impossible. For if Shakespeare, attempting an epic, was like to die of 'a plethora of invention,' what could save this dainty lover and copyist of visible loveliness, were he to attempt a novel? Yet while he was writing *The Child in the House*, and studies of Charles Lamb and The Bacchae, Pater was planning *Marius the Epicurean.*

The full title is *Marius the Epicurean, His Sensations and Ideas.* It is not called a novel; but the Roman hero of it is a boy when it opens, he advances in years, reaches full manhood and dies, before it closes; and it would probably have been called a novel had its chief claim and merit not been independent of the fiction.

Florian Deleal, in *The Child in the House*, had been so much himself, had so absorbed Pater for the time being, that no mention is made of his physical appearance. Marius also was Pater in the same degree, on the same evidence. Throughout the book we see his companions, never himself, in spite of the fact that his gestures, in praying, for example, are

described. He is seen from the inside, everyone else from the outside. Yet he is never fully alive; the author knows something about him which he is unable to communicate. Except in so far as he is a Roman—wears Roman dress and moves among Roman buildings and landscapes of the age of Marcus Aurelius—Marius agrees with what we already know of Pater from earlier writings. Pater, therefore, was well qualified for exhibiting Marius; but sometimes he tells us his hero's, sometimes his own, opinions. For, as when he was writing studies of Greek mythology, so now he does not hesitate to enrich his page from very different periods. The illustrations from his own experience are such as to give the atmosphere rather of an essay than of fiction: when, for example, he says that the modern visitor to Rome would share the opinion of Marius, when he heard the proclamation of noon, that Roman throats and chests 'must, in some peculiar way, be differently constructed from those of other people;' when he points out that the chairs of the senators were of almost the same pattern as those used when a Bishop pontificates in the Roman church; and when he is led by thinking of Roman cruelty to some very wise remarks about every eye having 'its own peculiar point of blindness, with its consequent peculiar sin.'

In such places Pater conveniently absorbs his hero. And yet at other times his deep interest in Marius causes him to forget that readers know nothing of him but what the author can reveal. Thus readers cannot follow him as he and they would have wished when he describes the development of his hero's style, how it gained a 'singular expressiveness' through the influences of a rhetorician on the one hand, and a master of imaginative prose on the other. Marius and Pater, too, have the advantage over most of us, when a Roman matron's dress is described, and her 'temperate' beauty is said to have reminded the hero of 'the serious and virile character of the best female statuary of Greece,' though the pathetic care of her infant was 'quite foreign to any Greek statuary.'

Seldom does Pater trouble to show ingenuity, and never more than that, in excusing or introducing his long passages of philosophical discussion or mere translation. These are choicely done and are excellent in themselves, but it rests entirely with the reader whether they shall be connected with the intellectual development of Marius, who stands aside for so long that when he is called up again Pater's memory, courtesy, and courage appear most remarkable. Nor are these the only transitions in which Pater *naïvely* denies the claims of artistic construction.

There are more abrupt transitions and more lengthy interruptions in many good books, such as The Decameron, The Arabian Nights, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Don Juan, but they are made for delight, and either they are essential or they satisfy an acceptable convention. In Pater they are simply a convenience which is probably also a necessity. He was so little at ease in narrative that he could not get over the ordinary difficulty of accounting for every day in his hero's life. For example, he tells how in a solitary 'privileged hour' of physical and spiritual well-being Marius enters into a deeper harmony with life. This ends the third part of the book. He opens the fourth part by informing us that the change wrought by that hour had been permanent; and so he advances to the description of a feast with the words 'And the permanency in this change he could note, some years later, when it happened that he was a guest at a feast. . . .' 'Some years later' is unsatisfactory in the history of a man's sensations and ideas, just as 'after some gloomy thoughts over night'—from 'some unknown cause of dejection'—is an unsatisfactory prelude to that spiritual change. Here, as frequently throughout the book, Pater is making things happen in accordance with his plan: or rather he is informing us that they happen so, and pointing

out their significance, without really convincing us of their actuality. Thus, when Marius is in the Catacombs and in the church at Cecilia's house, noticing the Christians, their hopeful epitaphs, their wonderful singing, 'the voices of joy and health' amongst them, the 'virginal beauty' of Cecilia and her children, we are made aware of visible and audible things such as would give Pater or Marius a grave delight, and might even become 'the solace or anodyne of his great sorrows,' but we do not truly see the spiritual adventure. The mixed atmosphere of the book is unfavourable to the full success of such a passage. Only an intellectual and critical interest can be taken in a scene introduced by the sentence:—

> To understand the influence upon him of what follows the reader must remember that it was an experience which came amid a deep sense of vacuity in life.

The artistic level of this *naïveté* is not the same as that of Pater's finest descriptions, for example, or of his translation of the episode of Cupid and Psyche from Apuleius. It might belong to a scientific study of character, which this is not; for again and again we are suddenly asked to accept something on the authority of the writer, not of the context: we are told, for example, that 'Marius believed that Cornelius was to be the husband of Cecilia; and that,

perhaps strangely, had but added to the desire to get him away safely'; or that thunder 'had sounded all day among the hills,' and had not given way at nightfall to rain. Such weaknesses mark where Pater has been lured into an attempt at making the book an interesting tale. A hundred others of a different kind—as where he inserts a reference to Hamlet in a quotation from an early religious book, show that in reality it was a work in which he was concentrating from every side all that he knew and felt. It is because he succeeded so well that *Marius* is sometimes the one book which a man refuses to part with.

As in *The Child in the House*, the central character is neither wholly Pater nor wholly someone else, and is treated in a mixed manner, but always with truth to the experience or the aspiration of the author. The other characters also, except where they are historical and well known, are like some one side of Pater, or of Pater's ideal. Thus Flavian, the friend of Marius in youth, has 'a natural alliance with, and claim upon,' what is physically select and bright, and cultivates the choice diction then fashionable among the elect. Thus the Christian Cornelius has a discretion, an energetic clearness, a purity which possess a physical charm, because they unite with 'the regular beauty

of his person.' And these characters are nothing more. Even the sketch of the brilliant, licentious Flavian is merely sufficient to remind us of the type which was in Pater's mind. The slight portraits of historical persons, who were already alive in our minds or were waiting to be touched to life, are on that account more satisfactory. The Marcus Aurelius, for example, reminds us how few dons ever could, or ever did, give such proof of the vitality of their studies. The words put into the mouth of that emperor, of Apuleius, of Lucian, are learnedly and precisely, at times felicitously, in character. Pater could write a new meditation for the emperor, a new episode in The Golden Ass for Apuleius, a new dialogue of the Gods or of the dead for Lucian. The studies of these men, and the translations from their work, together with the discussion of Stoic, Epicurean and Christian ideas, will some day be separated from their inessential context and printed together.

Marius is made to see and hear these great contemporaries and to meet and weigh the different philosophies. For he is the only son of an old landed family, instinctively religious and ceremonious, as well as full of intellectual curiosity and a desire for experience. Pater moves him about from one influential personality or philosophy to another, making him

choose this or that from among them, in a mainly conscious, leisurely self-culture. No passion, or accident, interrupts him. He is a deliberate controlled observer until that climacteric day when he has an illumination, resembling, in its degree, St. Paul's or Richard Jefferies'. Thereafter circumstances do a little entangle him and he dies in a natural and unforeseen manner which produces a shock in us, because he had seemed a kind of immortal student of self-improvement, or at least a Goethe. But Pater loved those who die young, like Pico della Mirandola, du Bellay, and Giorgione; and Marius before his death had already attained to that 'fatigue of soul' which some noticed in his creator. The 'weariness and depression' give an intrusive touch of reality to the last days of Marius; and how like Pater is the entry in Marius' diary: 'Everything seemed to be for a moment, after all, almost for the best.' Almost!

Pater's gravity, dignity, decorum, dubiety, and tenderness, delight lovers of those qualities, but though they may suffice for a statue, they do not make a man. The life that is in the book, and sometimes breathed upon Marius, comes from Pater and returns to him, making the book valuable as a contribution to our knowledge of the man. Is it possible to care

much that the boyish Marius had the choice between the old pagan religion of his fathers and the 'various sunshine' of the world? that his 'poetic and inward temper' at one time put him in danger of an 'enervating mysticism'? For we know nothing of that choice or this danger in Pater's history.

But, on the other hand, it is worth noticing that Marius thought the price paid for their 'high-pitched, passionately coloured' lives, by the Epicureans, a great one, because they sacrificed a thousand sympathies and things to be enjoyed only through sympathy. Pater had turned forty when he wrote this: it was fifteen years since he had first recommended the 'high-pitched, passionately coloured life,' and not so long since Marius, free from the tyranny of theories, thought of a life of 'various yet select sensations.' Nor is it without significance, though only as an idea, that Pater should soon afterwards speak of the 'expanding power' of the sense that we belong to a great system, and should give as examples of it persons who have gone out of a narrower sect into the Catholic Church.

Less significant is his statement that in Marius the thirst for every kind of experience had been at strife with a 'hieratic refinement.' Pater is evidently thinking of himself—the 'boy priest'

as he calls Marius and as he himself was in childish play—but what we know of his life and judge from his books makes it impossible that the victory of 'hieratic refinement' was long in doubt. He expresses his own preference, with little regard to Marius or the narrative, when he shows his approval of the tact, the good sense, 'ever the note of a true orthodoxy,' the 'merciful compromises' of the Church under the Antonines, when there was 'no forced opposition between the soul and the body.' He appears to express himself, and that with astonishing simplicity, when he declares the highest Platonic dream lower than any Christian vision. It is above all important to notice that the great change in the life of Marius comes through an incalculable accident, for which it cannot be said that his self-culture had done anything. That was perhaps a pathetic concession from one who had treated life in the spirit of art. Then by another accident Marius dies a Christian, 'naturally Christian,' in the sense that Christianity would have become him well.

In considering the development of Marius, Pater is only showing what might have happened under Marcus Aurelius to a young man of that kind. Unconsciously, but with greater precision and perfect accuracy, he was showing the nature

of a man, a middle-aged, middle-class, bachelor scholar, about the year 1880. He still thinks it the chief function of higher education to teach the art of 'so relieving the ideal or poetic traits, the elements of distinction, in our everyday life—of so exclusively living in them—that the unadorned remainder of it, the mere drift or *débris* of our days, comes to be as though it were not.' The words 'poetic' and 'distinction' are not new to his readers. *Marius the Epicurean* itself is fuller of 'poetry' and 'distinction,' not from books and pictures, but from life as Pater saw it, than any other of his works. Distinction is perhaps oftenest seen in the form of dignity, temperance, refinement and purity, such as would adorn the existence of 'poetic souls,' in 'exquisite places.' Marius, for example, began with 'an urbane and feminine refinement,' due to helping his mother with her 'white and purple wools' and caring for her musical instruments. Even to Pater the life of the house seemed pensive, spellbound, cloistral, monastic, only half real. The taste of Marius for the pure and exquisite is like Pater's. He avoided places where he had noticed snakes breeding. His dress was 'trim and fresh.' He revolted from the thought of excess in sleep, diet, and matters of taste, still more from 'excess of a coarse kind.' The air

in which he journeyed is often 'clear'; phrases like 'the clear morning,' 'the fresh morning,' 'the clear light,' abound. He notices 'extreme fineness' in a priest's white vestments. The 'reproachful austerity' of early morning light suggests one to whom early rising was unaccustomed and connected with important and perhaps distressing private matters. Freshness is said to have something moral in its influence; bodily health to have beauty 'even for the æsthetic sense'; clearness of thought to have a 'poetic beauty.' The epithet 'fresh' is attached to water as 'white robed' is to the priests, and when Marius drank of a sacred well 'the element when received into the mouth' was so pure that it was more like 'wonderfully pure air.' A type of beauty is said to be 'flawless and clean,' so that compared with it actual things seemed 'mean and sordid.' When Marius was an Epicurean or Cyrenaic he thought of African Cyrene, the birthplace of Cyrenaicism, and longed to be at the brilliant place on its 'fresh' upland, in the 'fine,' 'clear peaceful light' of that 'pleasant school' of 'healthfully sensuous' wisdom.

That the saint and such an Epicurean as Marius or Pater would understand one another better than they would the man of the world, is very likely. For with this physical clearness goes a moral purity and temperance. In

the first chapter Pater describes youths in white garments going to a religious service 'in perfect temperance,' 'as pure in soul and body as the air they breathed in the firm weather of that early summer time.' Marius, we are told, kept himself 'pure': which probably means that he was more than monogamous. It is as if clear air had suggested the moral and intellectual equivalent of an inhuman perfection. Grace was necessary to his eyes and to his mind. Even a mountain is said to be 'beautifully formed.' The 'graceful wildness' of a park was to his taste, even as he liked the 'transalpine temperance' amid the luxury of Cyrene. He thought that Italian farm life had a grace of its own and might help to make 'an ideal dignity of character like that of nature itself in this gifted region,' where vulgarity seemed impossible. Pater says that life seemed to Marius full of sacred presences demanding 'collectedness' of behaviour: he makes it one of the boy's earliest lessons to be temperate in religion, love and wine, to meditate on beautiful visible objects, and to avoid the sight of what was repugnant; and later on his fastidious sense of correctness went along with his horror of profanities. Not far remote from this were the love of ceremony, for example, the 'singular and in many ways beautiful ritual of Isis'—the ideas

of 'noble pain and sorrow even,' and of loves like those in 'Cupid and Psyche,' as contributing to the desired fulness of life — the religious nature of the contemplative æsthetic life, too refined for the contamination of experience. Morals, said Fronto the sophist, were one 'mode of comeliness' in things. As Marius saw comeliness everywhere, or the possibilities of it, he abjured no department of life, and suspected Marcus Aurelius for his contempt of the body. Even of sleep he had a 'religious appreciation.' The order and purity, as of a bride adorned for her husband, took hold of him in the Christian abode. Soon afterwards he thought chastity the most beautiful thing in the world. Pater seems to envy his hero his presence at the beginning of the æsthetic charm of the Catholic Church. At Rome Marius sees something in common between young soldiers and flowers; near the end of his life he records in a diary seeing a child 'like a delicate nosegay.' Between that æsthetic image and 'My love is like a red red rose' there is all the difference in the world. The one praises life, the other is unaware of it, save as a lovely picture. Burns makes us think more both of the girl and of the rose, Pater less both of child and nosegay.

Marius, like the author of his being, is a spectator, remote and kindly, and well might

Pater seem to envy him his presence at the beginning of the æsthetic charm of the Catholic Church. When he was yet a boy, a priest of Æsculapius came to him and admonished him to promote 'the capacity of the eye, insomuch as in the eye would lie for him the determining influence of life.' He was to be one of those 'made perfect by the love of visible beauty.' The naked, physical eye is omnipotent in his maker's book. When the Christian knight Cornelius is leading Marius he is the 'gleaming leader.' When the two stay together at a friend's house, Cornelius, to while away the time, puts on his knightly armour and displays himself; 'as he gleamed there' holding a silken standard, Marius thought of him as the type of a 'new knighthood or chivalry.' The figure, lacing on his armour, and then standing 'so stately,' reminds me of Giorgione's 'warrior saint, Liberale,' and the study for it 'with the delicately gleaming silver-grey armour' in our National Gallery, which Pater admired. It is a study from a picture, not from life. It is, I suppose, conceivable that an English officer, like Mr. Kipling's Galahad, the Brushwood-boy, might dress up in his uniform and pose to a friend; but Pater's picture bears no trace of life.

The very word 'picture' as applied to a natural group is used several times in the book.

In one place the cascades of a garden are so framed by a doorway that to one within the house they form a 'harmless picture' along with those on the walls, 'and scarcely more real than they.' The beauty of the Christian household is to Marius 'as it were a picture.' He sees the landscape of spring 'like some untarnished picture.' 'How like a picture!' he exclaims, at a scene, again from indoors. Even 'noble pain and sorrow' seem as a picture to him. The result of this spectator's attitude is that Pater sometimes forgets that the thing seen is not a picture, as he seems to do, for example, when he says that the healthy look of the Emperor Verus made Marius think of 'the muzzle of some young hound or roe, such as human beings invariably like to stroke.' There is *something* very just in the comparison, but it is absurdly expressed. The attitude is more effective when it is in character, as when Pater says that some wild country figures in garments stained by the weather —'fortunately enough for the eye'—moving in evening light, inclined Marius to poetry.

The fact is that the multitude of such things as are 'fortunate for the eye' was Pater's own inspiration again and again, and they gave him also his 'delightful sense of escape' from the confused, barbarous, outer world. Perhaps that was Professor Dowden's meaning when he said

that Pater was saved by a certain 'intellectual astringency,' by a passion for the concrete, and by the fact that he lived much in and through the eye. It is not clear what he was 'saved' from, but I suppose from committing himself with something more than the eye. For it is evident that his passion for the concrete and his living 'in and through the eye' were not the same thing as a profound, proportionate, and vital sense of reality. At least I see no reason for taking Pater's word when he implies that Marius did what he himself would have liked to do—gain an ampler vision that took up into itself and explained the 'scattered fragments' revealed to the eye. It was a desirable and a possible consummation, but not made inevitable or probable by Pater.

This hard visual treatment of life and nature in the spirit of art makes all the more noticeable the number of abstract descriptive terms, used when the physical could not be made to suggest the spiritual: the 'intimacy, dignity and security' of home, the 'simple but wholesomely prepared' supper, the carved faces expressing 'unction,' 'hilarity,' 'self possession,' 'reserve,' the 'gay' streets of which nothing else is said, the 'heroic level' reached by human deformity, the 'obscure distress' of a child, the Christian's wonderful tact of 'selection, exclusion, juxta-

position' which beget 'a unique effect of freshness, a grave yet wholesome beauty.'

The difference between the extreme visuality and this abstractness is perhaps the difference between his own 'inward and somewhat exclusive world of vivid and personal apprehension,' and the 'unimproved unheightened reality' of other people. The reality is for him no reality. Whatever the development of Marius, Pater at least never escaped from that 'inward and somewhat exclusive world,' unless by help of the instinctive gentleness and kindness which his consciousness made so little of, yet which gave him the truest thing in the book—Marius at his father's grave reflecting that the dead man had only reached his own present age. Of all the philosophies discussed the only one that touches Pater very nearly is the Cyrenaic. He speaks with something like conviction of the trustworthiness of what is seen and heard and felt, for, says he, the senses never deceive us about themselves, and about them alone do we never deceive ourselves. He is careful to defend this theory of 'Life as the end of life' from those who damned it—and Walter Pater himself—with the question-begging term of 'Hedonism.' Still more to be noticed is his care to inform us that Marius kept himself 'pure,' and was not committed to 'wasteful and

vagrant affections' by his Epicureanism. Cornelius the Christian first appears to Marius as a kind of Epicurean, with a standard, but a hidden one, of 'distinction, selection and refusal' in life.

Pater says of Aristippus of Cyrene, 'that old master of decorous living,' that discerning judges saw in him the effect of something like modern 'culture'; and just before this opinion come the central words of *Marius the Epicurean*. 'Supposing,' he says, 'our days are indeed but a shadow, even so, we may well adorn and beautify, in scrupulous self-respect, our souls, and whatever our souls touch upon—these wonderful bodies, these material dwelling-places through which the shadows pass together for a while, the very raiment we wear, our very pastimes and the intercourse of society.' That is the teaching of the book, slightly modified by a discontented aspiration towards something else which Pater calls Christianity. The conscious intention of the writer is to show that dignified Epicureanism is insufficient but may lead on to Christianity; what he has unconsciously and more powerfully shown is that he knew and had lived in Epicureanism, and that he believed Christianity to be something fuller and more satisfying even for one of his temperament. Pater's conscious intention can convince only the reader who is in the same detached position,

and has the same belief in a deliberate self-culture even in the highest matters. He can help some to found and others to build up a white and picturesque dignity of outward and, in some degree, of inward life. He can awaken or confirm an enthusiasm for 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are holy, whatsoever things are pure.' As he was himself a middle-class man of moderate but never endangered means, of an exquisite, hesitating, and not full-blooded nature, a lover of ceremony but too reticent and restrained for enthusiasm, religious, if at all by way of protesting against a coarse and careless worldliness, so others among modern men of this type, along with those who are so different as to be astonished and yet not offended by the type, are the likeliest to be satisfied with this studied confession of his state and his aspiration.

Each one of the still, hard sentences, so full of beautiful things, and of a reverent ceremonious regard for them, seems to epitomise Pater's attitude. He treats every word like his own Flavian, as though it were of 'a precious metal.' The total effect is like that of a lofty and well-lighted chamber, where a few pale and graceful men and women move discreetly among furniture and decorations, fit and scant though chosen from all climes and ages; or listen to

music full of passions that are not for them, or look out on varying wild and graceful prospects.

Conscious and elaborate as the writing is, its fullest effect is the unintentional one of suggesting the author. The conscious effects are not easily separated from the words so obviously used to gain them. Not only the Latin in italics, and the words marked with a note of exclamation, but many other words stand out from the page as words. Some of these are uncommon words like 'fardel' and 'bland'; many more are common words like 'fresh,' 'clear,' 'blithe,' used with an evident emphasis which by no means always adds depth or intensity of meaning. When, for example, Pater refers to Marius' 'gleaming leader' he does not make Cornelius appear before us gleaming, but reveals his own liking for gleams and for the idea of a young man in gleaming armour. A remarkable instance of the use of words is where he describes the communicants receiving morsels of 'the great, white wheaten cake.' Pater is so bent on making it impressive that I see that fact and not the cake at all. When he labels an apartment 'bland,' I believe he has merely increased the uneasy elements in his book. Nor are these modified by the few colloquialisms, the sentences interrupted by dashes, the tricks of speech, such as the oft-repeated 'all this' or

'all that,' and the careless use of 'as it will sometimes happen' within half a page of 'as sometimes happened'; for the colloquialism is but another artifice, and the carelessness of such a writer cannot be overlooked.

Doubtful uses and positive mistakes are also to be found. When Pater is supposed to be describing a walk taken by Marius, he speaks of the signs that '*one* was approaching the sea,' which, if not wrong, is irritating in an age when 'one' is so often abused and almost never necessary. Apparently he is guilty once of 'lay' for 'laid,' where he speaks of observing the remedies used by animals, and, 'what leaf or berry the lizard or dormouse lay upon its wounded fellow.' His slow, sidelong sentences lure him into an unsatisfactory use of 'with,' as in:—

> The coral-fishers had spread their nets on the sands, *with* a tumble down of quaint many-hued treasures, below a little shrine of Venus, fluttering and gay *with* the scarves, etc.

Moreover, the 'tumble down' is apparently applied to the fish and seaweed because they were tumbled down on to the sand. Here, again, 'with' helps to confusion:—

> Cornelius had ridden along in this place, and on the dismissal of the company passed below the steps where Marius stood, with that new song he had heard once before floating from his lips.

Imperfections of this kind are doubly dangerous in a writer who has little emotional rhythm to guide his readers, and ignores the sound of 'shorn cornfields' because he likes the epithet. Narrative had taught Pater very little. It had not cured him even of this shuffling progress:—

> That *Sturm und Drang* of the spirit, as it has been called, that ardent and special apprehension of half-truths, in the enthusiastic, and as it were 'prophetic' advocacy, of which, devotion to truth, in the case of the young—apprehending but one point at a time in the great circumference—most usually embodies itself, is levelled down, safely enough, afterwards, as in history so in the individual, by the weakness and mere weariness, as well as by the maturer wisdom, of our nature.

I cannot believe that a man who writes like that of a matter which he understands and cares for is a master of style.

IX

IMAGINARY PORTRAITS

In the year of the publication of *Marius*, as if that had sickened him of long studies, and given him a new hope in short ones, Pater published an 'imaginary portrait' of Watteau: two others of the same length followed in the next year, and a fourth in 1887, when they were collected under the title of *Imaginary Portraits*.

A Prince of Court Painters, the portrait of Watteau, was as unlike *Marius* as anything Pater could do, though he had used the same diary form for one of the last chapters of that book. He had for the moment, perhaps, suspected the style which was finished to the finger-nails, and he allows his feminine diarist the liberty of many dashes, brackets, notes of exclamation, but also allows himself such careful noting of visible things as tends to make the diarist a very *naïve* deception. The form has, however, one real advantage. It does away with the need of connectedness; it forbids us to

ask that the notes of visible things shall be more than notes.

Pater was particularly likely to sympathise with Watteau, in so far as he was a painter of what owed its reality for the most part to the eye. The gaiety, the frivolity, the licentiousness of many of his pictures would attract Pater, though no man was less capable of them than himself. He saw, as he made his diarist see, through Watteau's 'superficiality,' through the skin-deep or muslin-deep reality, to the 'singular gravity and even sadness of mien and mind,' which was the writer's, and may have been the painter's. He persuades us to look under the elms of the park for something more than fluttering dresses, even in one who cares so for 'the outsides of things.' For Watteau, he thinks, does not greatly value that dainty world, but is looking ahead, perhaps, like Marius, to some saving 'ampler vision' to relate these light things to eternity. Pater even makes the 'trifling and petty graces' of the fashionable world, *insignia* to Watteau of a 'noble' and 'better' world, because he—a mason's boy—had once seen them as enchantments through closed gateways.

But Pater is more important than the diarist or Watteau. He it was who had a 'physical want' for the graces of life, who noted the

'delicate odour of decay' rising from the soil in Watteau's pictures, the 'slim and well-formed' youth, the graces in Fénelon, which are 'too distinguished for this world.' Who else would see 'a sort of *moral* purity' in graceful decoration? Who else could have conveyed these same impressions of pathetic resignation, daintiness, frailty and sweetness? He cannot hide behind a diarist who records:—

> Odd, faint-coloured flowers fill coquettishly the little empty spaces here and there, like ghosts of nosegays left by visitors long ago, which paled thus, sympathetically at the decease of their old owners. . . .

No other man could have put quite the same sombre delicacy into the impressions of Watteau's pictures. These are among the highest achievements of Pater. He could exert all his individual power in a few clear visual details and a pervading sentiment, as when he pictures in *A Prince of Court Painters* the aristocrats in their 'garden comedy' of life, with an unreal light upon them among their moss-grown balusters, statues, and fountains:—

> . . . Only, as I gaze upon those windless afternoons, I find myself always saying to myself involuntarily, 'The evening will be a wet one.' The storm is always brooding through the mossy splendour of the trees, above those sun-dried glades or lawns, where delicate children may be trusted thinly clad; and the secular trees themselves will hardly outlast another generation.

Denys l'Auxerrois, the next 'imaginary portrait,' opens with more of Pater's accustomed dignity, but glides through some artfully quiet notes of travel, intended to give the tale an air of reality, into the main business of narrative. The hero is a young man who shows many signs of being the God Dionysus, alive, as an exile, in the Middle Ages. In fact, his story is stretched so as to include a parallel to the episodes of Zeus and Semele, and of Bacchus and Ariadne. He paganises the town of Auxerre with a vitality at first mainly beautiful, but in the end sinister, so as to destroy the God.

Pater worked hard to interweave this tale with mediæval life in field, church and street, and readers who are at all prepared to enjoy stories of 'the Gods in exile' will find in this one many sources of enjoyment. The story itself is a fascinating one, and it is likely at first to fascinate readers beyond the power of noticing how far it is the essence of the story, and how far Pater's art, to which they are subject. The two are distinct. The story, once its probable development is foreseen, may act by independent magic. Pater's treatment of it may for a time either aid this magic or have no effect. I do not feel that his art co-operates with the magic. I seem to see him impressed by the story and doing his utmost both by invention

and by elaboration of workmanship to hand on the impression, clearly and vividly. But I seem always to be in the workshop with him: the work of art has not begun to exist. The mingling of the abstract and the concrete method betrays him. The result is not the real mediæval thing aimed at, nor has it the picturesqueness which Pater could have given it had there been a picture to imitate. There is no reality, there is a ludicrous unreality, in the 'swarming troops of dishevelled women and youths with red-stained limbs and faces, carrying their lighted torches over the vine-clad hills.' It is invention, not imagination at all. Nothing in Pater, nothing, therefore, in the context, gives it life. The inability to represent action, except in moments such as pictures record, was never so unfortunate as in a score of passages here. Take, for example, the hunting of Denys to death:—

> The pretended hunting of the unholy creature became a real one, which brought out, in rapid increase, men's evil passions. The soul of Denys was already at rest, as his body, now borne along in front of the crowd, was tossed hither and thither, torn at last limb from limb. The men stuck little shreds of his flesh or, failing that, of his torn raiment into their caps; the women lending their long hairpins for the purpose. . . .

That seems to me to reveal simply an intellectual effort of Pater's to handle something

without any sort of belief or vision. It is offensive because it is done by the author in cold blood. If he had believed in the cruelty of those people the frenzy would have saved us from offence. It was too bold an attempt for a man who wrote about 'The performer on and author of the instrument,' and 'our friend Denys,' and the 'delightful glee' of men under the influence of Denys. He intervenes too often to give his own feeling about something from which he should have appeared detached; thus he speaks of a 'ghastly shred' picked from dead bones by somebody who did not think it 'ghastly'; and this is made the more intrusive by the presence of the word 'ghastly' half a page back, and 'shocking' immediately after. These are flaws of style, and they are not alone: for example, he uses the same structure—'A veritable country of the vine, it presents . . .' —in two sentences running; he speaks of 'old gibbous towns' on the river Yonne, where 'gibbous' is a worthless label; in the sentence beginning 'Of the French town, properly so called,' he achieves one of those formless crowded sentences which seem to have in view the distant ideal of an essay containing one full-stop.

Denys l'Auxerrois is not a successful attempt to give artistic form to notes of travel. Nevertheless, the introductory pages and the narrative

abound in those clear, firm descriptions of a sentence or two which give the quintessence, from Pater's standpoint, of a town or a country side. Charming in themselves as landscapes, these pictures have also the characteristic qualities of their artist. One page alone yields the following list of words which almost make a portrait as well as a landscape; 'severity of taste,' 'restraining power,' 'clearly quiet,' 'fresh,' 'clear,' 'gracefully,' 'delicate,' 'lightsome,' 'like the rivers of the old miniature painters.' Delicate, cold, detached, Pater always is, and usually with some indication of shyness or lack of ease, such as I find in this sentence (after a child's skeleton has been exposed at the foundation of a bridge that is being restored):—

> There were some who found themselves, with a little surprise, looking round as if for a similar pledge of security in their new undertaking.

The young Dutchman, Sebastian van Storck, a friend of Spinoza, was a far more sympathetic subject than Denys, and even than Watteau. His tutor reported of him that he was one whose life would be shaped by his theorem: his searching intellectual rectitude had 'a kind of beauty,' as Pater also might have said: others found a 'kind of beauty' in his enthusiasm for a theorem. In a solitary study visited only by birds he gave himself, 'with the only sort of

love he had ever felt,' to thought. It was 'a kind of *empty* place,' where nothing was done, nothing perhaps felt. Sebastian had a simplicity that was excess of luxury. He despised art, love, all possessions, even life. He disliked the drift of the Catholic religion towards the concrete. He envied the dead; he liked to think of the 'spellbound world of perpetual ice' at the pole. As if for a long journey he seemed to be getting rid of 'all impediments.' He would not have his portrait painted. He wrote letters but left them unsigned, lest anything should survive after death to betray his existence. He hungered not for eternity but for nothingness. Meantime a 'calm, intellectual indifference' was his possession, and it had the effect of making the girl who had long been thought of as his destined wife, seem 'vulgar' in her ordinary feminine humanity. She, like himself, like all definite forms of being, was but 'a troublesome irritation of the surface of the one absolute mind.'

Sebastian left a journal of his developing thoughts, which began with Spinoza's saying: 'Whoso loveth God truly must not expect to be loved by him in return.' That 'the One alone is' became an obsession. Another man might have used it as an excuse for using all the more carefully what was permitted to him

for a little while; but for him that One was 'as the pallid Arctic sun, disclosing itself over the dead level of a glacial, a barren and absolutely lonely sea.' He would escape from this trivial complicated world into a formless and nameless infinity, 'quite evenly grey.' What is more, he was 'weary.' Physical causes concurred with the intellectual—the 'merely physical accident' of phthisis. To be alone and by the monotonous sea which he almost loved, he went to share with the sea-birds an old family tower at the edge of the tide. There he was 'to set things in order,' had not an inundation disturbed him by luring him to save a child and to be drowned himself in the successful attempt.

This character had for Pater the charm which 'pure,' 'clear' things always had. As Marius liked the reproachful austerity of light in early morning, so Pater liked the young man who cared for none of the visible things. He and the tutor agreed there was a 'kind of beauty' in Sebastian's character. It was a beauty something like that of the character in *Diaphaneité*, 'denying the first conditions of man's ordinary existence,' cutting like a 'fine edge of light' across the effective background of homely luxury. The ordinary Dutch life, some of it 'seen through art,' is described in Pater's best concrete method, to which no life

could be better suited. Sebastian is the subject of his abstract method.

The young man is the personification of a thought, and it is remarkable how much alive he is. He is, for one thing, so much at home in Pater's style, not a grotesque captive in it, like Denys. The hardness and clearness of his refinement are qualities which that style describes consummately. The success of the portrait proves the intense reality of Pater's intellectual life. It is not a work of creative imagination. Intellect and fancy have been sufficient for the measure of life which it possesses. The end is good enough to have been the work of the unembarrassed imagination. The towers, the sea-birds, the sea, and the young man and his 'silent serving people,' the storm and the inundation, the child wrapped in Sebastian's furs and himself lying dead, have almost the life of imaginative creations. The tower and the sea-birds suggest the Flemish Maeterlinck's most impressive properties. The whole scene is touched with a more complete reality than the rest of the portrait, and is probably one of those happy accidents which Pater's method usually provided against, only too well.

Duke Carl of Rosenmold, as Pater says himself, is an attempt to embody in a portrait the aspirations of Germany at the beginning of the

eighteenth century towards an enlightenment which triumphed in Goethe. He pictures the young Grand Duke inspired by a Latin ode of the Renaissance, which prayed Apollo to come to Germany with his lyre. This pseudo-classic ardour, artificial but sincere, is well suited to Pater's style. Apollo comes by way of Paris; the Duke 'in the newest French fashion' takes a part in the play with which he tries to enliven the mediæval court; his organist plans a musical work on Duke Carl himself—'Balder, an Interlude'; and the whole brief adventure is theatrical, even to the whim of assisting at his own obsequies, and playing King Cophetua to a willing beggar-maid. Carl sets out for Italy, in search of the sun's 'physical heat' as well as of the God Apollo, but is recalled to rule by the old Duke's sudden decease. At a tryst with his 'beggar-maid' he is overwhelmed by a passing army, and his body hidden away for a hundred years from the eyes of men, as from the empty coffin and its prophetic 'Resurgam.'

With a surprising adroitness Pater adapts his by no means adroit manner to the humour of the story. The tone is perfect. His natural stiffness of gait is entirely in character. 'Balder, an Interlude,' mocks itself with solemn pretty humour throughout the piece, without spoiling the seriousness of Carl or of the total effect.

Pater himself is perhaps only once an intruder, where he speaks of the 'imaginative appeal' among the Alps, 'of the elements in their highest force and simplicity—light, air, water, earth.' There we recognise the author instead of the hero. It is an insignificant lapse, hidden away among a score of beautiful things, pompous things, entirely in keeping with the ideas and sensations of the 'German Apollo,' Balder, or Duke Carl of Rosenmold, the very name of Rosenmold being playfully apt.

Here Pater combines the critic and artist with unique felicity, as in a high degree he had done already in *A Prince of Court Painters* and *Sebastian van Storck*. In *Denys* he had failed because he tried to do without criticism. It is no wonder that he thought the *Imaginary Portraits* his 'best written book,' or that Mr. Arthur Symons saw in them his 'imaginative and artistic faculties at their point of most perfect fusion.' He was never less burdened by his matter. The portraits are self-sufficient and do not ask anything of the reader but attention to what Pater presents within their narrow limits. Pater presents, for example, Watteau and Duke Carl, and criticises them at the same time, to the reader who knows nothing of Watteau or of the dawn in Germany.

X

MORE IMAGINARY PORTRAITS

PLEASED with the short 'imaginary portraits,' Pater set to work upon a larger one, *Gaston de Latour*, of which parts were published in 1888 in Macmillan's Magazine. Gaston is a French Marius, of the age of Ronsard's poems, Montaigne's essays, and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Like Marius, he is the last representative of an old landed family. Like Marius, he is a religious boy and he voluntarily dedicates himself to the ecclesiastical life. He becomes 'a kind of half clerical page' in a bishop's household, meeting there a new world of 'vanity and appetite,' yet 'of honesty with itself,' which competes with his own refined and intellectual world. Ronsard's poetry shows him the beauty of the world and the flesh—'the juice in the flowers, when Ronsard named them, was like wine or blood';—and he drinks deep of the pleasures of an enthusiast for the new literature of his contemporaries, accepting it loyally, faults

and all. His religious faith has been 'a beautiful thing'; he now feels that the worship of physical beauty could become a religion of which 'the proper faculty would be the bodily eye.' This new religion seems to give 'the beauty of holiness' even to things evil. Then Montaigne shows him the 'actually æsthetic beauty' of disinterested thinking, the diversity of men's minds and all things, the undulancy and complexity in which the one sure and central thing is the individual mind of Gaston for Gaston, of Montaigne for Montaigne. And somehow it happens that the young man is wedded not quite willingly to a Huguenot, but leaves her for his father's deathbed, and so loses her for ever in the tumult of St. Bartholomew. He is himself lost to us for ever at the end of a lecture by Giordano Bruno, whose 'rank, unweeded eloquence' and 'loose sympathies' with life may or may not have influenced him; all we know is that nothing 'could ever make Gaston indifferent to the distinction between the precious and the base, æsthetically; between what was right and wrong in the matter of art.' These are the last words of the unfinished book.

Here, once more, as in *Marius*, Pater asks his reader to make a work of art out of several literary essays interspersed with narrative. His power has persuaded many to make the attempt;

with what success it is not necessary to inquire in this place. Pater himself did not take fiction very seriously; for we know that the last chapter of *Gaston* is an essay on Giordano revised so as to have an appearance of connection with the chapter before. As in Marius, he offers us a young man, sensuous but of unusual delicacy, going here and there in the worlds of men, art and nature. The men, art and nature are fastidiously described, and we are left to imagine how they would affect such a one as Gaston.

Gaston and his age are less remote and mechanical than Marius and his age. Pater enters into the life with more ease; in fact, he is so much at home and delighted that he forgets Gaston far more than he did Marius, and speaks for him more often. Even had the book been finished, it would apparently have been attractive chiefly as another study in autobiography.

Pater was a lover of houses, and probably one seen on his French rambles helped to inspire *Gaston*. So shadowy a figure might easily have been made simply by looking at an old house. I think of him as musing like Gaston in a mansion upon the Loire: 'what but flawless bodies, duly appointed to typically developed souls, could move on the daily business of life through

these dreamy apartments . . . ?' The brooding spectator is everywhere in *Gaston de Latour*. Pater is happiest in the chapters where he speaks of worship of physical beauty, with the eye for its chief ministrant, as a possible religion. Montaigne, even, provides the æsthetically beautiful 'spectacle' of a keen-edged intelligence.

Pater sees men as distant inaccessible beautiful things. Gaston, for example, has a sense of 'the dim melancholy of man's position in the world'; when his wife disappears there is the same dreamy detachment in his thought, based on imperfect news, of her 'passage into a vague and infinite space.' This is as true to Pater's nature as the delight in 'those dainty visible things which Huguenots despised' in Paris. With this should be set Gaston's feeling, which must partly have been Pater's, that his own world, compared with that of the outer world of action, was one of 'echoes and shadows,' if as much: as he shows when he speaks of incidents of war which 'we might think picturesque, were they told with that intention,' Pater is self-conscious about his spectatorial attitude. It is bound up with his shyness and pitifulness. For that pitifulness is a remote and shadowy sensation, such as comes to the child Gaston at times, and makes him aware of the 'great stream of human tears falling always through

the shadows of the world.' It can be theatrical, as when he refers to Henry of Navarre and Margaret of Valois, on their marriage, as 'jeunes premiers in an engagement which was to turn out almost as transitory as a stage play.' But most often it is a pathetic feeling about the 'pleading helplessness' of man or animal, about us *pauvres morts*. Perhaps this feeling also was fed more by pictures of life than by life.

Pater's liking for comparisons with art is strong in *Gaston de Latour*. The whole age of the Religious Wars, with its 'wildly dramatic personalities,' was a scene already 'singularly attractive by its artistic beauty.' The boys of the bishop's household make 'one lively picture with the fruit and wine they loved . . .'; they seem—to Pater—'of a piece with the bright, simple, inanimate things, the toys, of nature.' 'Inanimate' and 'toys' are significant words. This boy Gaston is aware of the 'spectacular effect' of the life about him. 'Inanimate' and 'toys' are significant because they throw light on the phrase: 'the earth, with *its deeds, its blossoms and faces*.' The men and women of the wayside appear in Gaston's memory as 'fitting human accidents in an impassioned landscape picture.' The corrupt world of Paris is in flower, for him, 'pleasantly enough to the eye.' Even 'grand passions'—such as that of an

ancestress who 'died of joy'—are things needed to give life its 'true meaning and effect.' Thus pity does not prevent Pater from thinking, apparently with some satisfaction, about cruelty. The mutilation of pregnant animals at Rome, described in *Marius the Epicurean*, the tearing to pieces of Denys l'Auxerrois, are referred to in a manner which might denote a physical satisfaction as well as intellectual revulsion. At least it is certain that Pater, like Swinburne in The Queen Mother, was attracted by the mingled cruelty and delicacy in Gaston's day, when 'perhaps the most refined art the world has seen' was flourishing. He introduces King Charles, 'steeped in blood,' into the daintiest apartment at Gaston's house. He pictures the Valois moving with wedding music, dainty gestures, sonnets, and flowers, to a 'surfeit of blood.' Of Catherine de Medici he remarks that two things are certain, that she was a fine speaker, and that 'the hands credited with so much mysterious ill-doing were fine ones.' 'The ferocities of a corrupt though dainty civilization' added perhaps a zest to the tranquillity of nature and the purity of his hero, amid 'the pleasant cleanliness' of the old house. A kindly inhumanity is one of the chief characteristics here as in so much of Pater's work. Reinforced by his sequestered egoism, it renders impossible any

great measure of reality in Gaston, with all his likeness to the author. Though often made to meet other boys and other men he is still a solitary victim of Pater's art, going hither and thither in obedience to we know not what purpose. He is most real when he is most alone, like Marius. These two, and Florian, Denys, Watteau and Duke Carl, are all either solitaries or exiles. It is very likely that Gaston was to meet, like the others, an early death.

In all three of Pater's other 'imaginary portraits' an early death falls upon the hero or one next to him—Hippolytus, Hyacinthus, the friend of *Apollo in Picardy*, and Emerald Uthwart.

Hippolytus Veiled is 'A Study from Euripides,' a story based upon the Hippolytus, and not a mere series of pictures translated or paraphrased from a Greek play like *The Bacchanals of Euripides*.' It grows with an academic modesty, out of an essay on local cultures in Greece. Quite unexpectedly—Theseus being the typical centraliser who destroyed local peculiarities—his Amazon mistress, Antiope, and their son, Hippolytus, begin to be the central figures, with Phædra, the true wife of Theseus. The infancy of Hippolytus among the hills gives Pater an opportunity to use his taste for the wild, simple and pure—the 'virgin air,' the chaste Goddess Artemis, 'a power of sanity,' to whom at

length he, the youth, dedicates his 'immaculate body and soul' as priest. Sometimes he goes down to Athens, where his princely half-brothers handle his homespun gown as if it were the fur of a wild animal, which is a touch to be paralleled in Pater's descriptions in *Marius* of the Emperor Verus, and of 'tall Exmes,' in *Gaston de Latour*, 'lithe and cruel like a tiger—it was pleasant to stroke him.' Hippolytus becomes a character in Athens, famous for his skill in driving the wonderful 'little mountain-bred beasts.' He is still the votary and priest of Artemis, learned in her peculiar wisdom, with all his triumph and popularity. Phædra the Queen, and the Goddess Aphrodite, look on him with delight. He is like 'water from the rock,' like 'the wild flowers of the morning,' like 'the beams of the morning star turned to human flesh.' Phædra avenges her slighted offers of love by accusing him of making offers to her. Hippolytus is disgraced, cursed by Theseus and Phædra, and under the anger of Aphrodite, but returns content to the hills and the study of his goddess' history. The curses seem powerless. Yet once more he goes down to race with his chariot. He wins, and is driving home along the shore when a great earthquake wave overwhelms him, fulfilling the purpose of Aphrodite or Poseidon.

But the story never gets free of the archæology nor makes terms with it. It reads like a very eccentric lecture, and details like the boy's 'nice black head deep in the fleecy pillow,' the 'white bed,' the 'white bread,' 'little white loaves,' the young man 'healthily white and red,' the flowers 'wholesome and firm on their long stalks,' are doubly conspicuous in contrast with mere criticism or commentary. At one time Pater gives himself up to the story as he feels it; at another he says 'legend tells briefly how . . .' etc., after which an expansion obviously his own is incapable of making an effect. He seems confused about the period of the story. Hippolytus is one man as a 'scholar' of Artemis and an inhabitant of a cultured Athens, quite another as a 'creature of an already vanishing world' of centaurs, Amazons and the like, and perhaps another as the innocent horse-breeder who asks why people need wedding, when they can find children or buy them. The sickness of Hippolytus, among other incidents, seems to be neither archæology nor art, but languid invention. The youth reveals Pater's own taste for the wild and pure; he has the 'placidity' of Marius, though like Denys he is a 'creature'; but otherwise he serves only to suggest how interesting Pater may have been as tutor or lecturer at Oxford.

In *Apollo in Picardy*, Brother Apollyon slays the boy Hyacinth with a quoit. Apollyon resembles Apollo as closely as Denys l'Auxerrois, Dionysus. He is a wandering man of lordly or godlike beauty—'could one fancy a single curve bettered in the rich, warm, white limbs' as he lies asleep, with a harp and bow beside him? The Prior of the monastery has at first some misgivings at the pagan sight. With his harp, Apollyon helps the builders to build with singular grace. His music and the touch of his ice-cold hand have magic in them. He charms men and beasts: the birds build at Christmas time; 'women and love-sick lads' go out to the caves and cromlechs and blasted trees, 'resorts of old godless secret-telling.' He brings the flowers and air of summer into the cold chapel. He has fits of cruelty, and kills the wild animals and the monastery doves. He astonishes the Prior with his quickness at the dead languages, and teaches the Prior's hand a strange skill and luxuriance in illuminating. Young Hyacinth dreads his influence on the old man, and would take him away. But one evening the boy finds an old quoit or discus cast up by a grave-digger. Apollyon at once knows the use of it, and the two play together in the evening, stripping at last in the summer heat. Suddenly a wind rises and moans and twirls the quoit, and

Apollyon has killed Hyacinth. Next day he leaves on his annual journey northward amid the songs which he has taught the peasants. He was commemorated only by the illumination he inspired in the book known as 'Prior Saint Jean's Folly.'

This book, 'taken from an old monastic library in France at the Revolution,' begins the tale, after an imaginary quotation from 'a writer of Teutonic proclivities' about the exiled Apollo and his malign magic. There is nothing to show by what good fortune Pater came upon the tale which explains the illuminations. But this has little or nothing to do with what makes the tale neither a plausible fiction nor an extravaganza, but simply an ingenious, interesting, often delightful, improbable invention, which ought to have been one of the two.

Emerald Uthwart is the work of several years later. It is an intimate study of a boy at school and at Oxford, at first without incident, but developing rapidly at last into a story. The hero and a school friend, now officers in the English army, disobey orders in a lull of the campaign, and though rewarded by a small success, are court-martialled and condemned to death. Emerald, after witnessing his friend's execution, is reprieved, and goes home disgraced, to die, not long afterwards, of an old bullet

wound. Reflection and minute description impede the piece as a tale, and the reader is made to feel that the medium is never quite a happy one for the material. Nevertheless, the material itself, and the emotional atmosphere, are interesting enough to make the piece readable and re-readable. For Pater concentrated upon it more of his own experience and thought than upon any other single study. It begins, for example, with a characteristic meditation on the pathos of epitaphs, such as Emerald's, who was born 'at Chase Lodge in this [Sussex] parish, and died there' at twenty-six: which makes the observer conjecture 'a very English existence' passed there without a lost week: but, as the tale tells, the conjecture is far wrong. He is so intimate with the old house that he never describes it, but speaks of a hundred things about it such as an inmate would know, within and without. All the countryside had the 'true sweet English littleness' of this 'land of vignettes.' Centuries had made the Uthwarts and their home, and the thought of it deepens Pater's tone to something beyond the eloquence which he bestows on the long-wrought beauty of La Gioconda. The introduction of Emerald among the boys of a public school makes too great a demand on Pater's power of dramatic narrative. Even the nickname 'Aldy' does not

impress us as the likely one for a boy called Emerald Uthwart. And once at the school, Pater's method becomes more and more detached and spectatorial. The Spartan method of the school attracts him, but he cannot sympathise; the 'wholesome English youths,' the 'Hellenic fitness' of their dress, their rows of 'black or golden heads,' are noted from afar off. There is something uncomfortable in his manner, as, for example, in the words, 'The reader comprehends that Uthwart was come where the *genius loci* was a strong one. . . .' The reflections suggest rather an essay on a public school than a short tale. The soldier is even less sympathetic than the schoolboy, and the colloquial phrases like 'do for the army,' do not overcome the æsthetic observer's epithets of 'dainty, military.' At Oxford, Pater's observation is beautiful of its kind, but not always appropriate, and he speaks of Emerald as he does of the old stonework which 'relieves heads like his so effectively on summer mornings.' When the youth 'finds an excuse' for coming into hall in his uniform, we see a mere picture like that of the Christian Cornelius in *Marius*, dressing up in his armour. The device of an extract from a surgeon's diary, at the end, is not the less foreign and strained because it is so like Pater, with the note about 'the peak of the

handsome nose' of Emerald's corpse remaining visible among the flowers of the coffin. Some of the colloquialisms, such as 'There's a book in the cathedral archives,' testify to the truth of Mr. Symons' observation that it was not natural to Pater to be 'natural.'

These 'portraits' had not given much, or consistent, ease to Pater's style. He still packs his sentences out of all reason. He can still say that in art 'there are "transports" which lift the artist out of, as they are not of, himself.' He will write about 'a tear upon the cheek, like the bark of a tree.' Still he cannot refrain from epithets applying less to the thing described than to his feeling towards it. Still his rhythm is often mere sound, without emotional value. To vary his words he will make Pausanias 'visit' Greece and Addison 'proceed to' Italy. He will use the word '*nacrés*,' of clouds, which would be fitting, perhaps, in a description written in the first person, not in a story. He gives way to a word like 'wholesome,' as in *Emerald Uthwart*, or 'white,' as in *Hippolytus Veiled*, where he refers also to a child in one sentence as 'it' and 'him.' He can be dryly abstract, as in speaking of 'centres of provincial life, where varieties of human character also were keen, abundant, asserted in correspondingly effective incident'; and concrete with epithets,

as in 'serene but covered summer night, aromatic and velvet-footed.' He still puts a word like 'lisped' in inverted commas, to indicate that he knows it is hackneyed. He continues to be consummate in single sentences of description, from art or nature, in transforming animate and inanimate things into words like graven images, in presenting his own view of thought and action, clearly and deliberately, with a sense of life's pathos leaving unmoved his central tranquillity.

XI

MISCELLANEOUS CRITICISM

APART from those incorporated in *Marius the Epicurean* Pater wrote only one critical study—a brief one of Rossetti—while he was at work on that book. After *Marius* was published, hardly a year passed without one or more studies appearing in the magazines, and shorter reviews in the newspapers. In criticism he made no experiments, nor gained much that he had not long possessed, except age and a measure of ease, real or affected. As far back as 1874 he had said that if you enter into the true spirit of the arts you touch the principle that 'the end of life is not action but contemplation—*being* as distinct from *doing*—a certain disposition of mind.' The arts he regarded as 'a type of beholding for the mere joy of beholding.' It has been seen how his own nature made this principle an unavoidable necessity, so much so that he rather treated life as if it were a collection of pictures after the great masters than treated it 'in the

spirit of art.' Thus Goethe, who disregarded 'no touch of the world of form, colour and passion,' was for him the perfect example of the speculative temper, the ideal contemplator of life in its complexity. Goethe's influence found a temperament prepared for it. The curiosity, indecision, shyness, weariness, of Pater, could hardly have chosen otherwise. He felt himself one of a disillusioned exhausted age which had lost the large sense of proportion in things, 'the all embracing prospect of life as a whole,' which the Middle Ages had from the top of a cathedral. The isolation of the individual among the terrible inharmonious multitudes impressed him and made it seem certain to him that art should become 'an end in itself, unrelated, unassociated.' He himself is one who continually writes of all things as a 'spectacle.' The religious history of the human soul, the 'pathetic pleasure' of a rustic, is for him a spectacle.

Nothing whatever is alien to such a one, for everything is indifferent. If life were long enough he would see both sides of every question, but never choose. He tells the author of Robert Elsmere that her hero's philosophical pretensions are spoiled by his lack of hesitation, for his objections to the Church 'may be met by considerations of the same *genus*, and not less equal weight, relatively to a world so ob-

scure, in its origin, and issues, as that in which we live.' From this obscure, immeasurable world, art, as it appears to him, offers a relief, a refuge, another world, 'slightly better—better conceived or better finished—than the real one.' Leaving art, he returns to life and the history of the world with 'what we may call the "æsthetic" spirit, driving always at the concrete, event or person.' At the same time he is not impatient with life and history: 'one of the privileges,' he says, 'of the larger survey of historical phenomena enjoyed by our generation looking back now over many unexpected revivals in doctrines and practice, is the assurance that there are no lost causes. Through the complexity of things, as of men's thoughts about them, the last word, on this side or that, never gets spoken.' He came to be not dissatisfied with the spirit of the age, because, like himself, it exercised 'merciful second thoughts' and because its *ennui* helped to counteract vulgarity.

'An age of faith,' he writes, 'if such there ever were, our age certainly is not: an age of love, all its pity and self-pity notwithstanding, who shall say?—in its religious scepticism, however, especially as compared with the last century in its religious scepticism, an age of hope we may safely call it, of a development

of religious hope or hopefulness, similar in tendency to the development of the doctrine of Purgatory in the church of the Middle Age:—

quel secondo regno
Ove l'umano spirito si purga:—

a world of merciful second thoughts on one side, of fresh opportunities on the other, useful, serviceable, endurable, in contrast alike with that *mar si crudele* of the Inferno, and the blinding radiancy of Paradise.'

And here, too, in the vast picture of history, there were refuges for the homeless soul. The Middle Age, for example, 'that poetic period, poetic as we read, perhaps a little illusively, has been a refuge from the mere prose of our own day as we see it, most of all in England.' He thought Oscar Wilde argued, 'with much plausibility,' that 'life, as a matter of fact, when it is really awake, follows art—the fashion an effective artist sets.'

Naturally then if Pater's art is at all the exponent of morality, it is especially so of the 'pitiful sympathy' which he finds in Shakespeare, which can help towards a true justice to men by cultivating 'those finer appreciations' of the words and acts of life. And Pater's own interest in the arts was fostered by his appreciations of the different characters ex-

pressed by a picture, an essay or a poem. 'Above all,' he writes, in reviewing Mr. George Moore's Modern Painting, 'that can be learnt in art—beyond all that can be had of teachers—there is something there, something in every veritable work of art, of the incommunicable, of what is unique, and this is, perhaps, the one thing really valuable in art. As a personal quality or power it will vary greatly, in the case of this or that work or workman, in the appeal to those who, being outsiders in the matter of art, are nevertheless sensitive and sincerely receptive towards it. It will vary also, in a greater degree, even to those who in this matter really know. But to the latter, at all events, preference in art will be nothing less than conviction, and the estimate of artistic power and product, in every several case, an object of no manner of doubt at all, such as may well give a man the courage of his opinions. In such matters opinion is in fact of the nature of the sensations one cannot help.'

Pascal and Sir Thomas Browne meant equally much to him, though in truth he speaks of them rather more as he believes them to be 'in themselves' than as they affect him. That the Religio Medici is 'a contribution, not to faith, but to piety,' for example, is a detached judgment, because Pater had not faith and only

'natural piety'; while the one piece of emotional self-expression—the remark that the affliction of a child 'may lead one to question the presence of divine justice in the world, makes one long that miracles were possible'—is irrelevant in his Pascal, a study of one who interested him in part for precisely an inversion of what is called the 'æsthetic life.' The 'æsthetic life' does not ignore its inversions. Yet Pater found several matters which he could not handle in print. As a picturesque spectacle, he liked amorousness, but not studies of sex, which he refers to several times, with ladylike decorum, as 'the dubious interests of almost all French fiction': so he was put out by the Rabelaisianism of Rabelais. Unlike Ruskin he had to write *sordes* instead of 'dung,' even when the animal was a sheep.

Pater's full approval, though not his sympathy, was limited in another way, by the teaching of Matthew Arnold. He speaks of 'lack of authority' in some literature, and of going from such to the 'reasonable transparency' of Hooker, and the 'classical clearness' of Hume and—of all men—of Bishop Butler. Arnold had at one time a great hold on him, so that he almost repeats his master's words in writing of Wordsworth, about the special worth of that poet to a busy urban generation. Like Arnold,

too, he was troubled by contemporary literature. 'Browning takes a good deal of time to read,' he says, half ludicrously, half humorously :—

> The complex, perhaps too masterful, soul of our century has found in Mr. Browning, and some other excellent modern English poets, the capacity for dealing masterfully with it, excepting only that it has been too much for their lucidity of mind, or at least of style, so that they take a good deal of time to read.

So Wilde's Dorian Gray alarms him as it would not have done if written in 1491 by a Florentine :—

> Clever always, this book, however, seems intended to set forth anything but a homely philosophy for the middle class—a kind of dainty Epicurean theory, rather—yet fails to some degree; and one can see why. A true Epicureanism aims at a complete though harmonious development of man's entire organism. To lose the moral sense, therefore, for instance, the sense of sin and righteousness, as Mr. Wilde's hero—his heroes—are bent on doing as speedily and completely as they can, is to lose, to lower organisation, to become less complex, to pass from a higher to a lower degree of development.

The essays on William Morris and Rossetti are the only ones reprinted by Pater dealing with contemporaries, and that on Morris was rejected from the second edition of *Appreciations*. He liked the 'definiteness of sensible imagery' in Rossetti, the 'lovely little sceneries'

in the poems, the style which made it obvious that the difficult word had been 'deliberately chosen from many competitors, and the just transcript of that peculiar phase of soul which he alone knew, precisely as he knew it.' He liked the novelty and unconventionality, and he knew Rossetti or his circle; but the essay is an awkward though careful and loyal tribute. He is not at home with his subject, but can be seen doing his utmost to bring his thoughts to the surface, as when he refers to 'a weirdly expressive soul' creeping into the 'white-flowered elder thicket' which Godiva saw at the end of her 'terrible ride.' His talk about love is so detached in all its seriousness as to seem perfunctory; it is founded entirely on Rossetti and Dante. 'The great affections of persons to each other' is quaintly inhuman, and the use of 'great' four times in ten lines indicates that Pater was trying to cover things up with the vaguely solemn. The title of The House of Life gives him an excuse for a characteristic wistful passage about houses and their associations—'the books, the hair-tresses of the dead and visionary magic crystals in the secret drawers. . . .' But he has to leave it and confess that 'one may even recognise' morbidity in Rossetti's thoughts on death, which recur 'in excess, one might think, of even the very

saddest, quite wholesome wisdom.' He ends by changing his key and seeming to write for the plain reader, to whom he recommends The King's Tragedy as an introduction to the poet. Nor is he quite at home with Coleridge's poetry, but writes a pedestrian commentary, well supported by quotations, as his manner is in reviewing. A painter of Coleridge's or Rossetti's quality could have moved him to something infinitely beyond these two essays, which do not show, as those in *The Renaissance* do, that he 'made a fine art of criticism.'

The *Wordsworth* is better, partly because he submits to the inspiration of the poet and so makes in prose a very tender and graceful *précis* of the poetry, sufficiently tinged by his own feeling, as, for example, his sense of the pathos of peasant life. Wordsworth's 'fine mountain quality of mind' attracts him æsthetically and morally. He notices, before any other of the poet's critics, that he was 'somewhat bolder and more passionate' as a poet 'than might at first sight be supposed,' but not, he thinks, too bold for the poetical taste, though he might have added that Wordsworth thought himself in danger of being too bold and passionate.

Sir Thomas Browne was another happier subject. His remoteness, the scanty evidence

for his life, and that not known to everyone, give Pater greater freedom in composing his picture by description and reflection and by quotations from Browne's writings and family letters. He is perfectly at ease with this curious seventeenth-century man, and makes a study of him which could only be worsened by developing into an 'imaginary portrait.' Urn Burial so delights him that he calls it both romantic and classical, and asserts that the best romantic literature in every age attains 'classical quality,' thus proving the very limited value of the distinction. The intimately personal character of all Browne's work gives him yet another reason for insisting on the importance of individual temperament, for insisting that men 'are not wholly at the mercy of formal conclusions from their formally limited premises.' Browne's prose, with all its 'lack of authority,' obviously gives him more pleasure than any other prose.

Pater succeeds with Prosper Mérimée, in part for the similar reason, that he is a foreigner. Thus Pater is free to shape him into a type of the detached artist, ennuyé and impersonal. He is fascinated by the human types, in Mérimée's stories, of 'a humanity as alien as the animals,' and by the lack of all those 'subjectivities' of style which fascinate him in other

writers. The essay is the portrait of a mind, not a complete and finished portrait, but dwelling on a few features with such intensity that if the result had not been a type it would have been a caricature. It ends in a manner probably suggested by the habit of reviewing, i.e. with an abridged translation of one of Mérimée's stories.

Raphael, again, appeals to Pater as a type, the type of the scholar, like Plato, Cicero, Virgil, and Milton, whose formula is: 'genius by accumulation; the transformation of meek scholarship into genius.' The 'brilliant personal history' of the artist, the 'master of style,' the 'softly moving, tuneful existence,' the 'still untroubled flawlessly operating, completely informed understanding' along with 'sweetness and charm,' the perfection, of Raphael, were the occasion of a kind of learned, documented hymn to the spirit of scholarship. It is a marvel of concentration; in fact, its fault is that the concentration seems in places to be abridgment; for example, it leaves Pater's opinion, that the biblical cartoons of this 'graceful Roman Catholic' rival Luther's scriptures, little more than an assertion. 'How orderly, how divinely clear and sweet the flesh, the vesture, the floor, the earth and sky!' exclaims Pater before the Ansidei Madonna. Raphael more than any

other man gives him this satisfaction of the 'divinely clean and sweet,' the perfect order, the golden moderation, which he has seen in fragments only in Hippolytus, in Emerald Uthwart, in Giorgione, in the Christian Cecilia. It is a perfection to which his own style is felt to be aspiring.

Pater's interest in scenery and architecture sometimes gets the better of his judgment when he is supposed to be depicting a character or telling a tale. Among his later essays are several where he finds an outlet for much lightly connected description—*Art Notes in North Italy, Notre Dame d'Amiens,* and *Vezelay.* They are more or less exquisite travel notes, in which the attitude of spectator is continuous and legitimate. Beautiful and curious things lovingly recorded, gossip and opinion, revelations of taste and feeling, along with brief historical essays, make up a whole that is almost genial as well as refined and quietly cheerful.

XII

THE ESSAY ON STYLE

PATER'S sense of the importance of personality in art is emphatically expressed in his essay on Style. He says that a writer is an artist, and his work fine art, in proportion as he transcribes, not the world, or mere fact, 'but his sense of it.' The essay is, and has come to be regarded as, of central significance in Pater's work. A really skilled anatomist could build up the whole of that work from the hints in this small part. Here, for example, not for the first time, he calls art a refuge, 'a sort of cloistral refuge, from a certain vulgarity in the actual world,' for scholars and all 'disinterested lovers' of books. Here he repeats that music is the ideal of all art, because in it form cannot be distinguished from matter, or subject from expression. Thence he moves to the opinion that literature finds its specific excellence in the 'absolute correspondence of the term to its import.' He means the same thing as when

he says that 'the essence of all good style, whatever its accidents may be, is expressiveness.' The world agrees with him. It does not go very far, but it is common sense.

There is more than common sense in the essay. For though Pater admits that the facility of one man and the difficult elaboration of another may be equally good art, his own preference is clear. He insists that literary artists are 'of necessity' scholars, and seems to think of them as all writing for the 'scholarly conscience,' for the reader who will follow them 'warily, considerately, though without consideration for them.' Thus he is forced to allow that a man can be a great writer without being an artist. He credits readers with finding one of their greatest pleasures in 'the critical tracing out of conscious artistic structure, and the pervading sense of it' as they read. Pater himself was one of these readers, as he shows in writing of Flaubert and Flaubert's masterly sentences; that these sentences fit their meaning with absolute justice, he says, 'will be the judgment of immediate sense in the appreciative reader.' With Flaubert, he is willing to believe that the problem of art is to find the one word or phrase, or sentence, for what is to be expressed. It is

certain, however, that men have written well without knowing this.

Pater makes no claim to have studied the methods of writers from their manuscripts, diaries, or biographies. His words are a personal confession, which might have been foreseen from many another passage in his writings. In the essay on Sir Thomas Browne he had already spoken with kindly disparagement of the early English prose-writer who, 'hardly aware of the habit, likes talking to himself; and when he writes (still in undress) he does but take the "friendly reader" into his confidence.' He had complained that this busy age would not educate its writers in correctness: he had urged them to 'make time to write English more as a learned language.' He had made the Roman Flavian weigh the precise power of words and phrases, disentangle associations, and go back to the original and native sense; and in answer to the imaginary question, 'Cannot those who have a thing to say, say it directly?' he had seemed to think that the outworn Victorian world permitted only 'a patient and infinite faultlessness.'

I shall not argue the question whether perfection is to be compassed by malice aforethought. Certainly deliberateness and patience alone can hardly make any writing perfect,

unless it be a notice to trespassers or a railway guide. I doubt if they could adequately frame an advertisement of a fowl-house for sale. There must be an impulse before deliberate effort and patience are called in, and if that impulse has not been powerful and enduring the work of its subordinates will be too apparent.

It might be taken for granted that the writer's workshop ought not to be visible through his words. Even the note-taking of Tchekof's story writer, though it gave him a dog's life, may not have betrayed him in print. But Pater is one of the few writers who have emerged from obscurity with a frank desire that their words should give a view of the workshop. He thought that a writer would wish his reader to seek, and to be able to find, the history of his choice of certain words.

There were elaborate writers before Pater. Keats, for example, made half a dozen attempts at the twenty-sixth verse of The Eve of St. Agnes:—

> Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
> Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees: . . .

The learned or unlearned reader is not disturbed by any chips or splashes of the process: even when he has examined the process the result is

not damaged. The reason is that this result is harmonious, and, in no question-begging sense, natural. But Keats was, as it were, an ancient Briton in comparison with a modern writer like Vernon Lee. I quote from her the more willingly that she is an admirer of Pater, and has apparently come under his influence. She writes of a visit to Montreuil:—

We had driven downhill into delicious river land; swampy grass under poplars, green dykes and flowering ditches; and a flush stream, long weeds floating in its crystal, which we punted across. I thought this was what we had come to see; surely enchanting enough. When at the path's turn suddenly that vision again—I must call it one—the circle of Montreuil on its height: and, plunging sharp down against a hillside of sere grass, a great zigzag of russet walls against a screen of trees, closing out all other view and connecting that towered city with the pellucid river between flowery banks. These words convey no definite image, I fear. Think, therefore, of those long landscapes which bend sharp round a missal margin; that mural crown, that spur of mighty walls, and the fairy river below. The margin of a missal? Nay, of some book of chivalry—'Morte d'Arthur' or 'Quatre Fils Aymon.'

Sterne and his contemporaries were spared much ineffectual fumbling for words by not seeing such things as this. But as for me, I would rather have seen those walls of Montreuil from the river (even at the price of the above villainous description) than—well, than have written those five chapters of the 'Sentimental Journey.' But then, you see, I was not given my choice.

Such a writer, consciously or unconsciously, seldom shows anything but his workshop. We see the tools and the materials; we hear the saw; but what comes out of that workshop is chiefly sawdust.

I have no wish to plead for the 'natural eloquence of ordinary conversation, the language in which we address our friends, wives, children, and servants, and which is intended only to express our thoughts, and requires no foreign or elaborate ornament.' It is for most people easier to speak as they write, or more or less as journalists write, than to write as they speak. Nor do I consider the matter settled by Mr. Arnold Bennett's *dicta*:—

> Style cannot be distinguished from matter. When a writer conceives an idea he conceives it in a form of words. That form of words constitutes his style, and it is absolutely governed by the idea. . . . When you have thought clearly you have never had any difficulty in saying what you thought, though you may have some difficulty in keeping it to yourself.

This amounts to nothing more than that no man can escape self-expression in the presence of a sufficiently intelligent listener or reader, though it also implies an exclusive acquaintance with very ready speakers and writers. It is certain that there is a kind of unconscious self-expression which no man escapes. Thus Pater

expressed something in himself which made John Addington Symonds revolt as from a civet-cat. Some have thought that his style reveals his use of gilt-edged note-paper. Style, even in Pater, is not a 'mere dress' for something which could be otherwise expressed and remain the same. A thing which one or a thousand men would be tempted to express in different ways is not one but many, and only after a full realisation of this can we agree with Pater's statement that in all art 'form, in the full signification of the term, is everything, and the mere matter nothing': we can agree and yet wonder how Pater could say also that 'form counts equally with, or for more than, the matter.' Even carelessness or conventionality of language has its value as expression, though if it ends in a pale, muddy, or inharmonious style, the value will be very little in this world. That two men possess walking-sticks of the same kind is not nearly so important as that one twirls and flourishes it, while the other regularly swings it once in every four steps—unless, of course, the observer is a manufacturer, or retailer, or connoisseur, of walking-sticks. Literature is not for connoisseurs. Is there no difference but in length and sound between 'It has not wit enough to keep it sweet' and 'It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction'?

or between 'Under the impression that your peregrinations in this metropolis have not as yet been extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in the direction of the City Road' and the form of that idea which Mr. Micawber introduced with the words 'In short'? It is not satisfactory, then, to say that we think with words, or that 'the best words generally attach themselves to our subject, and show themselves by their own light.' John Hawkins spoke with feeling and spoke truly when he ended the account of his third voyage with these words: 'If all the miseries and troublesome affairs of this sorrowful voyage should be perfectly and thoroughly written, there should need a painful man with his pen, and as great a time as he that wrote the lives and deaths of the martyrs.'

Yet some wise men have thought well of the language of the unlearned. Vaugelas, the grammarian, recommended women and the unlearned, rather than the learned, as authorities on words. Pedants are like some old people who know so much about a man's parents and grandparents that they take little note of himself, unless he present some differences, in which case they regret the old and condemn the new. Herrick used scores of words known to him as

a University man, and only to be understood by the like to-day: few of these are to be found in those poems which are now thought best even by University men. He would not write in Latin or Volapuk, but he had cravings for better bread than is made with wheat. He was fortunately most often aware that 'the Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a Human Being possessed of that information which may be expected of him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man.'

De Quincey, deploring the style of his own day, said that 'the idiom of our language, the mother tongue, survives only among our women and children'; and in their day Cicero and Quintilian said the same. Swift attributes the degeneracy of conversation in his time to the excluding of women, and looks back regretfully to the assemblies under Charles the First at the houses of ladies whom the poets celebrated. It is quite possible that there are observers to-day who could say the same as De Quincey. But De Quincey did not mean that all unlearned or all well-bred women spoke pure English. He describes a vulgar woman who let lodgings and in a few minutes' interview made use of the words 'category,' 'predicament,' 'individuality,' 'pro-

crastination,' 'diplomatically,' 'inadvertently,' 'would spontaneously adapt the several modes of domestication to the reciprocal interests . . .' and finally drove him away nervously agitated by 'anteriorly,' and lamenting the absence of any 'malaprop picturesqueness.' William Cory was in dread of 'anteriorly' when he said: 'It is waste of time to finish our sentences; we should suggest by them, as when we quote, or say the first words of a Psalm. We make too many bow-bow speeches.'

Somewhere in Wilhelm Meister, Goethe says that a man will not think clearly unless he talks. Mr. George Moore, after quoting Numa Roumestan's 'I cannot think unless I talk,' says: 'I often find my brain will not work except in collaboration with my tongue: when I am composing a novel I must tell my ideas; and as I talk I formulate and develop my scheme of narrative and character.' Many a man has said or written much as Goldsmith did: 'To feel your subject thoroughly, and to speak without fear, are the only rules of eloquence.' When Coleridge wishes to praise Southey's style, he says: 'It is as if he had been speaking to you all the while.' But he does not say that Southey's writing was the same as his speech; for a mere copy of speech might have a different effect from the spoken words, in the absence of

the individual voice and its accompaniment of looks and gestures.

It is the last thing that many writers would think of, to write as they speak: and the more solitary and learned the writer, the less likely is he to attempt so unnatural a thing. Thoreau, for example, writing of the 'memorable interval' between spoken and written language, has it that 'the one is commonly transitory—a sound, a tongue, a dialect merely, almost brutish, and we learn it unconsciously, like the brutes, of our mothers. The other is the maturity and experience of that: if that is our mother tongue, this is our father tongue, a reserved and select expression too significant to be heard by the ear, which we must be born again in order to speak. The crowd of men who merely spoke the Greek and Latin tongues in the Middle Ages were not entitled by the accident of birth to read the work of genius written in those languages: for these were not written in that Greek and Latin which they knew, but in the select language of literature.' Yet it has been said that in Elizabeth's time 'men wrote very much as they spoke; the literary language has probably never stood nearer to the colloquial, and, consequently, it was peculiarly adapted to express the exuberant thought and feeling of the age. . . . And when,' continues Professor Earle, 'we fully see the im-

portance of this social principle, we may be in a position to do justice to the great services which have been rendered to English prose by the newspaper press. That large and influential order of men, which daily provides news and comments upon public affairs, is animated by one highly developed professional instinct, and that instinct is the social sense of its relation to the public. Under the salutary influence of this honourable sentiment, continued through the tradition of generations, our English prose has (more than by any other means) ascertained the right pitch of elevation, and the most available means of attaining lucidity accompanied with the relief of variety.'

'The hunters are up in America,' and in Fleet Street grace and dignity are being added to what inherited neither, and there is more space and less time than could be filled by writing like speech. Men could be found there who would think Locke's style 'a disgusting style, bald, dull, plebeian, giving indeed the author's meaning, but giving it ungraced with any due apparatus or ministry,' and they would also consent to decorate it with due apparatus or ministry. The phrase is from Professor Saintsbury's introduction to Specimens of English Prose and Style, and caused Pater to protest against the implied separation of form and matter.

The reason why Professor Earle was pleased with this Prose Diction, and why Mr. W. B. Yeats believes that 'in this century he who does not strive to be a perfect craftsman achieves nothing,' is that men understand now the impossibility of speaking aloud all that is within them, and if they do not speak it, they cannot write as they speak. The most they can do is to write as they would speak in a less solitary world. A man cannot say all that is in his heart to a woman or another man. The waters are too deep between us. We have not the confidence in what is within us, nor in our voices. Any man talking to the deaf or in darkness will leave unsaid things which he could say were he not compelled to shout, or were it light; or perhaps he will venture once—even twice—and a silence or a foolish noise prohibits him. But the silence of solitude is kindly; it allows a man to speak as if there were another in the world like himself; and in very truth, out of the multitudes, in the course of years, one or two may come, or many, who can enter that solitude and converse with him, inspired by him to confidence and articulation. Wisely did Quintilian argue against dictation, that 'privacy is rendered impossible by it; and that a spot free from witnesses and the deepest possible silence are the most desirable for persons engaged

in writing, no one can doubt. You are not therefore necessarily to listen to those who think that groves and woods are the most proper places for study. . . . To me, assuredly, such retirement seems rather conducive to pleasure than an incentive to literary exertion. Demosthenes acted more wisely, who secluded himself in a place where no voice could be heard, and no prospect contemplated, that his eyes might not oblige his mind to attend to anything else besides his business. As to those who study by lamplight, therefore, let the silence of the night, the closed chamber, and a single light, keep them, as it were, wholly in seclusion. . . .'

What Wordsworth condemns in that sonnet of Gray's beginning

> In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
> And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire . . .

is due to the remoteness of the words, not from speech, but from thought. It is unlikely that Gray was thinking of Phœbus Apollo. Much good poetry is far from the speech of any men now, or perhaps at any recorded time, dwelling on this earth. There would be no poetry if men could speak all that they think and all that they feel. Each great new writer is an astonishment to his own age, if it hears him, by the apparent shrillness and discordancy of the speech he has

made in solitude. It has to become vulgarised before common ears will acknowledge the sweetness and wisdom of it. Pater still astonishes men with his falsetto delicacy, but may lift posterity up to him.

The more we know of any man the more singular he will appear, and nothing so well represents his singularity as style. Literature is further divided in outward seeming from speech by what helps to make it in fact more than ever an equivalent of speech. It has to make words of such a spirit, and arrange them in such a manner, that they will do all that a speaker can do by innumerable gestures and their innumerable shades, by tone and pitch of voice, by speed, by pauses, by all that he is and all that he will become. 'Is it wonderful,' asks Newman, after quoting Shakespeare's lines on the 'poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' and 'the poet's pen' giving 'to airy nothing a local habitation and a name':

'Is it wonderful that that pen of his should sometimes be at fault for a while—that it should pause, write, erase, re-write, amend, complete, before he satisfies himself that his language has done justice to the conceptions which his mind's eye contemplated?

'In this point of view, doubtless, many or most writers are elaborate; and those certainly

not the least whose style is furthest removed from ornament, being simple and natural, or vehement, or severely business-like and practical. . . .'

As Pater said, 'Scott's facility and Flaubert's deeply pondered evocation of "the phrase" are equally good art.' The result in each case is harmony. They wrote of what, albeit sometimes against their will, they understood and in some way felt deeply about. Flaubert did not go hither and thither fitting words, like labels, to man, beast, or article of furniture. He was only less quickly satisfied than most men by words that rose to his call when writing, only more conscious of the approach of that satisfaction. It was his misfortune. In Pater's case, it sometimes appears to be his fault. He gave cause for being supposed to think laboriousness in itself a virtue, and he has left some writing which has no other virtue. His disciple, Lionel Johnson, has actually called him an artist 'enamoured of patient waiting upon perfection,' not, be it observed, 'enamoured of perfection.' Certainly, Pater was not one in whom good matter and deep feeling could have rapidly made a 'good style' by chemical combination. He was not fluid, expansive, confident, sanguine. He was sluggish, reticent, uneasy, dispirited: he could make perfect single sentences, but could

not always, or very often, connect them perfectly, and he disdained the use of sentences which had only a structural conjunctive value. He was constantly aware of his powers, and they were not put forth without his express direction. Well would he have comprehended the words of Stevenson:—

> Passion, wisdom, creative force, the power of mystery or colour, are allotted in the hour of birth, and can be neither learned nor simulated.

He would perhaps have agreed that 'the just and dexterous use of what qualities we have, the proportion of one part to another and to the whole, the elision of the useless, the accentuation of the important, and the preservation of a uniform character from end to end—these, which taken together constitute technical perfection, are to some degree within the reach of industry and intellectual courage. . . .'

Whether he would have seen wisdom in Stevenson's criticism of Milton's 'I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue' is not so certain. I do not think he would have taken the course of saying that 'S and R are used a little coarsely,' or that one of the prose-writer's tasks is that of 'artfully combining the prime elements of language into phrases that shall be musical in the mouth.' So self-conscious and

diffident a man might have taken the view that Milton was obeying Stevenson's laws unconsciously, and that conscious obedience would carry no man very far. The most and the greatest of man's powers are as yet little known to him, and are scarcely more under his control than the weather: he cannot keep a shop without trusting somewhat to his unknown powers, nor can he write books except such as are no books. It appears to have been Pater's chief fault, or the cause of his faults, that he trusted those powers too little. The alternative supposition is that he did not carry his self-conscious labours far enough. On almost every page of his writing words are to be seen sticking out, like the raisins that will get burnt on an ill-made cake. It is clear that they have been carefully chosen as the right and effective words, but they stick out because the labour of composition has become so self-conscious and mechanical that cohesion and perfect consistency are impossible. The words have only an isolated value; they are labels; they are shorthand: they are anything but living and social words. What, for example, is the value of 'extorted by circumstance,' applied to the first edition of Religio Medici? If the reader happens to know the circumstance he smiles at the phrase: if he does not know he smiles, if at all, at Pater.

Then, is it not pedantry to follow up the familiar 'you got harmony' (in place of melody) with 'and you were gainers'? The number of times he has repeated a not obvious word very soon after his first use of it, is almost sufficient proof of the unwariness induced by his labour: that is to say, it told against the supposed control over his resources which alone could justify it. There are other signs that he could not inspect every inch of his writing with the same consummate care, and that work upon detail weakened his judgment and his sense of harmony. Why did he call Raphael 'a signal instance of the luckiness, the good fortune, of genius'? Was he a little ashamed of 'luckiness,' yet inclined to leave it as a colloquial leaven? Or was it the mere trick which he employs two pages later in 'But here, too, though in frugal form, art, the arts, were present'? His colloquialism, or deliberate easing of manner, is practically always ineffectual, like swearing in a stilted talker. He produces only a blush or a cold shudder by his 'ah' or 'can't.' Nor does he gain by the measure of hoisting a popular phrase amid inverted commas; or by spelling a word so as to remind readers of its true meaning—as in 'aweful,' or by explaining one word by another—as 'illustrate' by 'lustre.' And in *Sir Thomas Browne* did he split an infinitive in pure self-denial?

'Scholarship,' says the Pateresque Lionel Johnson, 'is the only arbiter of style.' It may be so, and it may also be that scholarship will in the end convert posterity to 'gibbous towns.' In the meantime 'gibbous' remains a word not sufficiently full and exact to be of scientific value, and, having no other value in this place, is but a label.

Pater was, in fact, forced against his judgment to use words as bricks, as tin soldiers, instead of flesh and blood and genius. Inability to survey the whole history of every word must force the perfectly self-conscious writer into this position. Only when a word has become necessary to him can a man use it safely; if he try to impress words by force on a sudden occasion, they will either perish of his violence or betray him. No man can decree the value of one word, unless it is his own invention; the value which it will have in his hands has been decreed by his own past, by the past of his race. It is, of course, impossible to study words too deeply, though all men are not born for this study: but Pater's influence has tended to encourage meticulosity in detail and single words, rather than a regard for form in its largest sense. His words and still less his disciples' have not been lived with sufficiently. Unless a man write with his whole nature concentrated upon his

subject he is unlikely to take hold of another man. For that man will read, not as a scholar, a philologist, a word-fancier, but as a man with all his race, age, class, and personal experience brought to bear on the matter. Mr. Le Gallienne has rightly pointed out that the 'scientific' pleasure of noting the learned uses of words is a very slight part of the whole pleasure of reading, at least when the book is good.

In his *jeu d'esprit* on Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature, R. L. Stevenson affected to regard words as bricks. 'The sister arts,' he said, 'enjoy the use of plastic ductile material, like the modeller's clay; literature alone is condemned to work in mosaic with finite and quite rigid words. You have seen those blocks dear to the nursery: this one a pillar, that a pediment, a third a window or a vase. It is with blocks of just such arbitrary size and figure that the literary architect is condemned to design the palace of his art.' Professor Earle treated this seriously, but his criticism is not the less interesting. 'If,' he said, 'there is in the linguistic philosophy of Prof. Max Muller one sentence that can be indicated as dominant over all the rest, it is this: that words are yielding, passive, ductile, impressible, obsequious to thought, unstable, almost fluid. The softness of the verbal element

renders it too prone to metaphor and mythology, and furnishes the nidus of the worst ailment under which language labours and languishes. . . . To say that words are as rigid as bricks, does not convey a true idea of the nature of words. If it were so, how would it be possible for single words to run through a gamut of semantology? The successive significations grow out of one another; how could that have happened if their outline of thought had been rigid? Did not this pedigree of senses develop itself precisely because the words were ductile, or germinative, precisely because they were anything but rigid? . . .' J. A. Symonds has said that 'words are for writers what lines and colours are for painters. . . . Thought is, however, so inextricably interwoven with language, and words re-act so subtly upon mental operations, that language cannot be regarded as a vehicle in the same way as the marble of the sculptor, the pigments of the painter, are plastic vehicles. It is possible, indeed, to treat language æsthetically; that is to say, with special reference to its sonorous, rhythmical, suggestive and symbolical qualities. The writer has to obtain his effects by manipulating a material already pregnant with intellectual and emotional meanings.'

When words are used like bricks they are likely to inflict yet another punishment on the abuser, so making it more than ever impossible that they will justly represent 'the conscious motions of a convinced intelligible soul.' They refuse to fall into the rhythms which only emotion can command. The rhythms satisfactory to the mere naked ear are of little value: they will be so much sonority or suavity. How rhythm is commonly regarded may be shown by the following:—

> The sentence can have two other qualities, rhythm and a certain cadence, light or grave, or of some other kind, in harmony with its meaning. These graces of the sentence are best regarded as refinements added to its essential and indispensable qualities.

Here again appears the necessity for the aid of speech in literature. Nothing so much as the writer's rhythm can give that intimate effect 'as if he had been talking.' Rhythm is of the essence of a sincere expressive style. Pater's rhythm is intermittent, and, except in short passages like that on La Gioconda it is rarely emotional, or of such a nature as to give pleasure, when read aloud, to more than the sensual ear. His admirers have been conscious of this. Oscar Wilde, too vigorous to fall into this error, has said:—

Since the introduction of printing, and the fatal development of the habit of reading amongst the middle and lower classes of this country, there has been a tendency in literature to appeal more to the eye, and less and less to the ear which is really the sense which, from the standpoint of pure art, it should seek to please, and by whose canons of pleasure it should abide always. Even the work of Mr. Pater, who is, on the whole, the most perfect master of English now creating among us, is often far more like a piece of mosaic than a passage in music, and seems here and there to lack the true rhythmical life of words and the fine freedom and richness of effect that such rhythmical life produces. We, in fact, have made writing a definite mode of elaborate design.

Mr. Edward Hutton admits the fact, but not as a fault. 'Pater's work,' he says, 'appeals to the inward eye, to that sense of music or rhythm, not to the outward ear. Unlike Macaulay's work, his prose cannot readily be spoken. There is nothing of rhetoric, of oratory about it. He seems to take note of inward harmony, that is too delicate, too subtle, for the voice.' It is, of course, true that writing stands for thought, not speech, and there is a music of words which is beyond speech; it is an enduring echo of we know not what in the past and in the abyss, an echo heard in poetry and the utterance of children; and prose, if 'born of conversation,' is 'enlivened and invigorated by poetry.' But is it true there is a harmony which the ear can-

not acknowledge? Has not the eye the power to act as a ghostly messenger to the ear? I doubt whether Pater's sidelong, pausing sentences have any kind of value as harmony, heard or unheard. It might be retorted, in the words of Joubert, that 'he who never thinks beyond what he says, nor sees beyond what he thinks, has a downright style,' that there is 'a vulgar naturalness, and an exquisite naturalness,' and no one would expect of Pater a downright style or a vulgar naturalness. It may be retorted again that Pepys is often intimate without aid of rhythm. But a diary, more or less in shorthand, is no argument. And if it is a question of naturalness, even an exquisite naturalness is hard to attain, when the writing, disturbed by protuberant words, has no continuous rhythm to give it movement and coherence. What Pater has attained is an exquisite unnaturalness. He has created a prose of such close pattern and rich material that almost any piece of it is an honest and beauteous sample. It is the finest example of that picture writing which Professor Raleigh thought impossible in European literature. It is, however, careful as a rule not to offend the ear, and thus is made a kind of lucid vacuum in which the forms and colours can appear as behind the purest glass for display. About one who wrote for posterity

it would be unseemly to say more, and already the irreverence of discussing Pater's style may appear to be founded on a pretension to gild refined gold. That I may have been deceived by an orator who 'keeps his hands under his cloak' and speaks to a tribunal 'composed only of wise men' is possible, but beyond my judgment.

XIII

PLATO AND PLATONISM

In his earliest published essay Pater had spoken of himself as one of those 'for whom the Greek spirit, with its engaging naturalness, simple, chastened, debonair . . . is itself the Sangrail of an endless pilgrimage.' He had shown more than once a wistful admiration for Christianity and for the Catholic Church. He aspired to be what he conceived to be a Christian, a Greek with Christianity added to his Hellenism, but by instinct and natural piety he was a Greek; he was continually saying, as it were under his breath, that 'the athletic life certainly breathes of abstinence, of rule and the keeping under of one's self.' His devotion to the Greek spirit never abated: it was the foundation of the Renaissance studies, and the fairest pillar of the mediæval. 'Rational, chastened, debonair,' the words are like an incantation for him. The only Greek whom he slighted was Plato, that *anima naturaliter Christiana* as I think someone has called him; for had not

Plato seemed to slight the concrete by his 'formless, colourless' ideal? What, asked Pater, was that ideal worth compared with a rose leaf? But very early Pater gave a hint that he too, like Winckelmann, would except Plato from his proscription of the abstract philosophers, and that on account of what in Plato was 'wholly Greek and alien to the Christian world,' his love of visible things and his visual manner of handling a subject. Pater also had an insistent tendency to abstraction, though it is true he would excuse it by speaking of the æsthetic beauty of temperance and so on. Here Plato was behind him. When he said that 'all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music,' then also Plato was behind him. Music for him, and for Plato, had the double advantage of being pure form and intangible, like moral beauty. Plato's fondness for images borrowed from music is noticed again and again in *Plato and Platonism*, Pater's last book. He notices it because it is significant and because it delights himself, and he goes beyond the philosopher in calling 'the faultless person' of Charmides, the visible presentment of that temperance which is like 'a musical harmony.'

'The visible presentment' of temperance is utterly characteristic of Pater and especially of *Plato and Platonism*. It could hardly have

been foreseen that Plato would have given him many excuses for dwelling upon the visible and the concrete. For though, in a rather earlier Greek essay, he had said that to have achieved the visible beauty of the 'Discobolus at Rest' in the Vatican was 'the Greek's truest claim for furtherance in the main line of human development,' he had gone on to say that the Greek had done so well with what he had that he 'merited,' to solace him for the loss of his joy in the visible, the Christian revelation. *Plato and Platonism* is not without some surprisingly conventional reservations, in the matter of marriage and of reverence for women, in favour of the Christian code as against the Greek; but though important on account of their conventionality, they are isolated. The book is in fact a hymn to visible beauty—intellectual beauty often, but always visible. Plato, he says, loved temperance, 'as it may be *seen*, as a visible thing—seen in Charmides, say! in that subdued and grey-eyed loveliness, "clad in sober grey."' Pater never comes nearer to an intemperate enthusiasm than here. Charmides and visible temperance for Pater are a great deal more than they were for Plato. In him they were connected with real life in Athens: at Christian Oxford they were impossible hallucinations.

The æsthetic charm of moral beauty is more conspicuous in *Plato and Platonism* than in any other book. Pater speaks of the 'irresistible charm' of the æsthetic expression of a 'peculiarly austere moral beauty' developed by Greek discipline. The person of the youthful Charmides appears in three or four distinct places, always as 'Temperance, the temperance of the youthful Charmides,' or the like. He insists that for Plato the reality of beauty was important 'in the practical sphere,' and because the loveliness of 'virtue as a harmony,' the 'winning aspect' of the images of the virtues, outweighs their utility. 'And accordingly,' he says, 'in education all will begin and end in "music," in the promotion of qualities to which no truer name can be given than symmetry, æsthetic fitness, tone. Philosophy itself indeed, as he conceives it, is but the sympathetic appreciation of a kind of music in the very nature of things.' But then Pater himself, applying this to the 'practical sphere,' can only say that the spirit of Plato is to be found wherever men have been inclined to lay stress on beautiful ancient buildings or decorated walls as having a 'possible moral effect.' This is unsatisfactory. Pater is happier where he is praising 'the wholesome vigour, clearness, purity' of mountain air and light, and the 'reproachful aloofness' which

'keeps sensitive minds at least in a sort of moral alliance with their remoter solitudes.' The high hills 'reproach' him like the lights of early morning, perhaps for the same reason, that he is not young, strong and vigorous, and is conscious of not having that 'wholesome vigour, clearness and purity.' They give him a window opening on a better and braver world, where Temperance is a beautiful youth.

Charmides obsesses, or almost obsesses, Pater, because Pater is delivered over to the idea of man as a work of conscious art, of treating life in the spirit of a connoisseur in the artistic forms assumed by men and nature. He calls the pupils of Socrates young men with 'amplest leisure for the task of perfecting their souls, in a condition of religious luxury, as we should perhaps say.' This 'luxury' has a charm for him as 'abstinence' and 'temperance' have. Perhaps a love of the concrete and visible is not incompatible with unreality. There is, if not unreality, at least a remoteness from experience when he speaks of the amorous temper, which he supposes in the youthful Plato, 'indulging, developing, refining' the senses, and through them the fancy and the power of speech; and furthermore of the temperance which followed as having 'the charms of a patiently elaborated work of art.' One might

almost suppose that Pater regarded Plato as the artist. For he likes not the 'bodily disease or wretched accidents' which come from outside and are not, so he thinks, beautifying; but can speak of the suffering deliberately inflicted on the young Spartans, as pain according to 'rules of art' and, therefore, as probably refining, and helping towards that perfect self-consciousness which Pater desires—'Everyone, at every moment, quite at his best.' The English public school was not unknown to him, but he regarded it as a spectator, and as a would-be spectator he thinks of the youths of Sparta. One of the things in old Greece which he would have best liked to see and hear, he says, is the Spartan boys chanting in school; they make him think of 'novices at school in some Gothic cloister, of our old English schools.' He imagines the young Spartan telling a questioning visitor that his 'laborious endless' education was to make him 'a perfect work of art, issuing thus into the eyes of all Greece.' He is remembering the words, quoted in his *Winckelmann*, the words of a Greek youth: 'I take the Gods to witness, I had rather have a fair body than a king's crown.' Someone has compared Pater's feeling for the human form with Michael-angelo's, but a man must unlearn the warm words of Keats, or Jefferies, or Whitman, before

he can agree with this. It is the statue, not the human form—the idea of youth, not youth—that Pater worships.

Yet he is all but warm when he says that the philosophic mind will never be quite healthy again because it has learned to oppose the seen to the unseen, as falsehood to truth. He laments the passing away of the 'objective and unconscious, pleasantly sensuous' Greek mind and the coming of scholasticism. 'There is always,' he says simply, 'something lost in growing up.' He calls the notion of deity, behind Plato's willingness to do away with the multitude of Gods, very abstract and uninteresting. 'Vain puerilities' he thinks a man may justly call such abstractions, and he returns again to the 'ill turn' which they did that 'delightfully superficial Greek world,' by putting it on the quest of a 'kind of knowledge perhaps not properly attainable.' There is feeling in his shudder at the 'clear, cold, inaccessible, impossible' heights of the Imitatio, not an awed sense of grandeur as at the mountains of Lacedæmon. He prefers Pythagoras' 'wild' thought of metempsychosis because it is 'a matter of very lively and presentable form and colour,' and he shows how the 'extremely visual' fancy of Plato was pleased by it. He lays great stress on Plato's love of visible

things, of the concrete world of individual men and youths, and justly points out how it helped Plato to qualify 'the Manichean or Puritan' element in Socrates. Yet he regrets Plato's part in the 'generalising movement,' and finds another excuse for thinking of the 'delightfully superficial' Homeric world, where knowledge was still of 'the concrete' and 'the particular,' and life 'a continuous surprise.' With true feeling he exclaims: 'We cannot love or live upon genus and species. . . .' He holds it possible for a man to make himself a work of art, but not to suffer for the sake of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.' He was sad at 'the whole woeful heart of things,' at the pitifulness of men, at early death, and the like, but he could not bear the thought of anything that might sacrifice the 'uniqueness of the individual.' It would spoil the pageant, if men surrendered goods and wives and homes, etc. Thus he attacks Plato's proposal for treating men as fowls or dogs by common marriages. Forced legislation like this is 'altogether out of harmony with the facts of nature,' he believes. What is more, it is to him a strange and forbidding experiment, seeing that he lives in the 'light' of laws on those subjects, formidable under Victoria, and 'irrevocably' fixed by the Christian Church. Pater

knew no breeders of dogs, nor how they succeed in making such perfection as he desires, or would like to behold, in human things. He has in fact come up against a matter out of actual life on which there is strong feeling, and he takes the side of the crowd.

Possibly he was thinking of his audience of young students. He did not excise from the printed book many things which had special reference to them, their examinations, their university life. For them he remarked: 'What long sentences Plato writes!' For them he ejaculated, now and then, breaking up his rigid sentences: 'You know,' or 'There's the point.' For them he put 'method' in its Greek form, with the equivalent, 'a circuitous journey.' For them he pronounced that what was to be seen and heard was more interesting in the nineteenth century than in Plato's or Homer's days. Nor was he afraid to tell them, much as he had written thirty years before, that in this 'short life' the one mentally 'vital and lively' thing was the concrete and the particular, the visible and the sensuous. He also suggested the reading of Wordsworth's Ode on the Intimations of Immortality. He was willing to make them smile with the French opinion of football, that it is rough *et même très dangereux*. For them he succeeds in packing

these few lectures with what it was immediately necessary to know, and far more than that, in a quietly provocative way, about Plato, Heracleitus, Zeno, Pythagoras, Parmenides, Zeno, Socrates, Athens and Sparta. The form is midway between the academic and the artistic, modestly and exquisitely skilful in tracing the ancestry of Plato's ideas and relating them to contemporary Greek life. He is always close to his authorities, never in the air; and yet the work is thoroughly his own. Except that lecturing simplified and loosened it a little, his style is what it was before. The poverty of concrete material is atoned for by continual reference to the concrete. His reverence, his curiosity, his luxurious purity, his disciplined and as it were monastic sensuousness, his kindliness, are the more impressive on account of his diffident, if self-contained and resolute, manner. Coming after Ruskin and Arnold, without the exuberance of the one, or the worldliness of the other, or the public attitude of either, he is separated from them also by his concentration, his self-criticism, and his independence of the moment. Those critics urge the middle-class to spend time more wisely, to use more intelligence in the ordinary business of life: Pater, stealthily revolutionary, ignores that business and bids men concentrate and

disregard the world. He is tranquil and unobtrusive, but not to be put by. As he begins to speak, a curtain falls upon the world; the light is changed, it is steady and full, unaccompanied by warmth; clear and graceful forms appear in it, an architecture, a humanity, a race of animals and trees and plants, more exquisite than the eye has seen. The style is that of a man searchingly self-conscious at as many points as possible: it is meant for posterity and stands on foundations above the tides of time. The philosophy is designed for those who would attain a beautiful and various life by self-conscious effort at as many points as possible, following pleasure of every order, with a consideration of remote effects on themselves and others, with a self-control and decorum beyond the dreams of virtue.

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